The Nation of India in Contemporary Indian Literature

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Introduction

> One way of defining diversity for India is to say what the Irishman is said to have said about trousers. When asked whether trousers were singular or plural, he said, "Singular at the top and plural at the bottom."[1]

To A. K. Ramanujan, quoted above, India appears much like the proverbial elephant as apprehended by the blind men: what one perceives is a function of where one looks. Ramanujan thus offers a challenge to anyone who would attempt to represent India: to show India's unity and its multiplicity without letting one obscure the other. In using the homely image of a pair of trousers (rather than the more exotic elephant), Ramanujan foregrounds the language of domesticity that is so much a part of Indian nationalist discourses and contemporary Indian writing in English. And yet, the description of the trousers also evokes hierarchy; is it possible to view the Indian nation in its diversity without privileging or yoking oneself irredeemably to a regional, religious, gender, or class perspective?

This book examines the literary struggle to imagine the Indian nation as a discrete community without overwriting its very real sources of heterogeneity. The bulk of this monograph focuses on contemporary writers of fiction, who have seen the ideal of the secular, tolerant nation-state challenged by phenomena ranging from the declaration of Emergency and suspension of democracy in 1975–1977 to the rise of Hindu fundamentalism in the 1990s to the ongoing failure of development initiatives to address both the depth and extent of rural and urban poverty. It also examines one of the major sources of this ideal, namely, the writings of India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. How have the events of the nearly sixty years that have elapsed since Indian independence challenged or reinforced the ideals on which the nation was founded?

In order to understand the answer to this question, it is necessary to both situate the question of representing India in contemporary theory and understand the specific history of national self-representation on the subcontinent.

Therefore, in the first section of this introduction, I briefly situate this study with respect to major theorizations of the nation, emphasizing the ways in which the specificities of Indian history both coincide with and deviate from more general theories of the nation such as that of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*. The second section focuses on the issue of national language. Anderson emphasizes that the nation is a linguistic unit, but the Indian nation-state arguably lacks a national language. I present a brief history of the national-language debate and the problem of associating with the nation any language used in India. Though this study focuses on fiction written in English, it does not argue that English is the definitive language of India or the only literary language of value. Nevertheless, English does occupy a unique position in Indian political and literary history.

The status and history of the Indian novel in English is the subject of the third section of this introduction. The novel occupies a special place in discussions of literary history and nationality, and, with the exception of chapter 1, will be the primary focus of this book. As the novel is an imported genre, however, the relationship between the novel and the nation in India cannot be the same as in the West. Furthermore, I contend that in order to understand the novel as an Indian national artifact, it is necessary to scrutinize its link with other forms, particularly political writings. As such, both in this introduction and throughout this book, I will be highlighting the connections between contemporary writers of fiction and India's nationalist leaders, primarily Nehru, but also M. K. Gandhi and Subhas Chandra Bose.

Nation

In his famous account of the rise of the nation, focusing primarily on examples from Europe and South America, Anderson stresses the essential modernity of the nation and its association with what he terms print capitalism (commercial, print-based publishing in vernacular languages). In other words, for Anderson, the creation of national identities was inexorably linked to the development of printing in the vernaculars. Though I do fundamentally agree with Anderson's figuration of the nation as an imagined community—one whose imagining occurs to a significant degree in works of literature—my account departs from his at several points. For instance, Anderson argues that the formation of the nation as an imagined community precedes, by definition, the rise of the state. I wish to posit, however, that the relationship between the nation (imagined community) and the nation-state (a political formation) is more fraught than Anderson allows. Nations, in Anderson's figuration, must "take the form of states,"[2] because the "sovereign state" is the

"gage of freedom" in the post-Enlightenment era.[3] His suggestion that the state is the inevitable, and the desired, result of all nationalist imagining is, however, premised on the universal acceptance of a particular set of post-Enlightenment values. Broadly speaking, these values include, among others, secularism and individualism, both of which have been widely challenged in the postmodern period and may be particularly problematic from a postcolonial perspective.

This is not to say that Anderson's formulation has no resonance in the Indian context. Indeed, as I will show in chapter 1, Nehru felt that the absence of political independence hindered the realization of Indian identity, a view echoed by Ravinder Kumar, who defines nationalism as the belief that "political freedom strengthens the moral fibre and heightens cultural creativity" in a community.[4] Yet the nation and the nation-state are not isomorphic; certainly, as Anderson's account acknowledges, a sense of national community can precede political independence. Given the current ubiquity of the nation-state as a political form, however, it seems possible, at least in theory, that a sovereign state might exist without, or with only a very weak, sense of national community, or that the boundaries of the nation-state and the scope of the imagined national community may fail to correspond in significant ways. These are not scenarios that Anderson addresses, but they may well be relevant to considerations of Indian nationality.

Several Indian critics maintain that as recently as the 1990s, more than forty years after the arrival of political sovereignty, the nation itself was, at best, still in its nascent stage. Rumina Sethi, for instance, complains that "although we have a political nation-state, the nation itself is yet to be born," pointing out that many of the ideals to which the Indian nation-state lays claim have been put into practice incompletely, if at all.[5] Jaidev echoes Sethi's critique, noting that "nation-ness" will only be attained in India "if justice is realized along class lines," an event that may yet be some ways off.[6] In contrast, Aijaz Ahmad does not figure the Indian nation as a concrete, realizable end, but rather as a "process . . . a *terrain of struggle* which condenses all social struggles, so that every organized force in society attempts to endow it with specific meanings and attributes."[7] In other words, the nation, for Ahmad, is forever in the process of being reimagined and has no single, predefined end; the nation-state need not appear at any fixed point along its trajectory.

Indeed, Indian critics have also suggested that the relationship between the nation and the nation-state should be rethought. Rekha Pappu laments that though the nation is ostensibly the site of considerable theoretical interest, it is the state, not the national community or its members, that is most often the object of concern.[8] In contrast, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

acknowledges the asymmetry between the nation and the nation-state, but emphasizes the validity of the latter, since, at best, "nationalism can only ever be a crucial political agenda against oppression . . . it cannot provide the absolute guarantee of identity."[9] In other words, the formation of a nation-state can be an important tool for addressing legitimate political demands but cannot be sufficient in and of itself, since nationalism, by definition, involves the subordination of other, competing claims.

Nor is India necessarily unique in having achieved a nation-state prior to any broad-based sense of national identity. It is generally held that by the late twentieth century, nationalism had permeated even remote villages in West European countries; the phenomenon, however, was still relatively recent in historical terms, even in what is arguably the most "nationalized" of nations, France.[10] If the triumph of print capitalism could only be completed in an age where literacy became nearly universal, it could hardly be expected that nationalism would have permeated popular consciousness in India, where a significant minority is still illiterate. At the same time, nationalism has achieved a level of prominence in Indian life that the literacy rate alone might not suggest.[11]

Partha Chatterjee's account of Indian nationalism in *The Nation and Its Fragments* is particularly pertinent to any study concerned with the Indian nation and the place of that country's diversity within it, since it emphasizes the limits of national history even as it narrates it. As such, Chatterjee's work is sensitive to recent critiques of nationalist historiography—such as those of the subaltern studies group, led by Ranajit Guha—that attempt to undermine dominant historical narratives in order to bring suppressed subject positions to the fore. Subaltern studies accept the notion that "[o]bsessively concerned with the West and other forms of local elitism, nationalism fails to speak for its own people: on the contrary, it suppresses the politics of subalterity."[12] There is no easy answer, however, to Spivak's charge that the works of Guha and others still leave the subaltern voiceless. Harish Trivedi has responded that it is only in English that the subaltern proves mute; Spivak's later endorsement of what she calls the "organic intellectual," a subaltern subject who begins to breach the intellectual fortress, suggests at least a partial acceptance of this view.[13] Though she is notably skeptical of the figure of the native informant, Spivak appears cautiously optimistic about the possibility for the meaningful communication of difference through literature in the vernacular and its translations into English.

Similarly, Sunil Khilnani's *The Idea of India* considers the rhetoric of Indian nationalism, both before and after independence, as a means of approaching India's national history.[14] His attention to language politics and the competing discourses of various national leaders makes him particularly

apposite to this study. Both Chatterjee and Khilnani posit the nation and national identity as important objects of inquiry, while simultaneously revealing their contingent status; they also explicitly recognize the threats to national unity posed by religious communalism and other competing identifications. Khilnani, in particular, with his concern for the future of Indian democracy, recognizes that an inflected reading of history is a central, if implicit, part of any political program, and that India's current political situation necessitates such self-conscious, political reexaminations.

According to Chatterjee, in early conceptions of the Indian nation,

> the world of social institutions and practices [was split] into two domains—the material and the spiritual. The material is the domain of the "outside," of the economy and of statecraft, of science and technology . . . The spiritual, on the other hand, is an "inner" domain bearing the "essential" marks of cultural identity.

Indian nationalists, including Nehru, generally recognized the superiority of the West in the former areas and proposed to imitate it. The more one embraces elements of a foreign material culture, however, "the greater the need to preserve the distinctiveness of one's spiritual culture"; consequently, "nationalism declares the domain of the spiritual its sovereign territory."[15]

This partitioning of the world echoes, of course, the division of the Victorian world into the public and the private; the two ideas emerge at approximately the same time. To varying degrees, the spiritual domain of anticolonial nationalism maps onto the private sphere, as both may be located in the home and gendered as female. This division, however, was a discursive and ideological construct whose utility arose from the anxiety generated by the very lack of clarity about the scope of national, colonial, domestic, and public domains. Furthermore, nationalist activity, in attempting to reappropriate public space for indigenous concerns, often blurred the boundaries between the spheres. Gandhi's decision to wear the dhoti at all times was an explicit rejection of British notions of public and private.[16] The boundary between the home and the world also began to break down in other respects:

> By the turn of the century . . . these putatively discrete spheres had entered into a substantial commerce with each other, facilitating Indian women's participation in nationalism in the late nineteenth and e arly twentieth centuries; elite Indian women . . . were summoned in unprecedented numbers to a range of nationalist causes.[17]

Indeed, the entrance of women into the public sphere and the abolition of purdah (the practice of confining women to a segregated area of the home

where they would never see, or be seen by, men, other than those of their own family) were actively pursued as nationalist goals.[18] Yet women's roles in the nationalist movement were highly circumscribed; Gandhi, though keen to dignify domestic activities and female suffering, demanded that women prioritize their family responsibilities and only embark on nationalist activities after undertaking a vow of celibacy. Even then, the roles advocated for them were generally of a maternal nature; they were specifically forbidden to participate in the famous Salt March, for instance.[19]

The changing and contested role of women within (primarily elite) Indian society was not the only challenge to this relatively simplistic construction of national identity. The notion of the modern, secular Hindu—brought to the fore and embraced by, among others, Nehru, who was uneasy about religion in a formal sense and unapologetically enthusiastic about Western discourses of science and economics—simultaneously reiterated and problematized the public–private divide. Secular Hinduism, as a concept, demands that the cultural and religious aspects of Hinduism be separated; the secular Hindu is, necessarily, someone who has either relegated the practice of his or her faith to the private sphere or forsaken religion as such altogether, but continues to practice the culture of Hinduism in both public and private spheres. Nehru's rejection of religious beliefs and rituals, for instance, did not prevent him from identifying with Kashmiri Brahmanic traditions of dress and social conduct, or from celebrating Hindu epic texts such as the *Mahabharata.* Nor is secular Hinduism only alleged to be available to Hindus per se, but to all Indians. As such, it becomes the basis for a modern, national, Indian culture.

If, however, as Anderson argues, literature is a primary repository of national culture, then any sharp delineation between religion and culture is apt to be incomplete at best, as, "[f]or most of human history, religion and literature have been virtually inseparable."[20] Even in nation-states that profess an overt and impenetrable division between religion and state, which India does not, national culture and faith cannot be easily untangled.[21] Furthermore, the process of dissociation and recuperation that characterizes the lives of secular Hindu figures such as the nineteenth-century poet Michael Madhusudan Dutt is one of individual cultural positioning and therefore not easily applicable to the nation as a whole.[22] The dilemma of the nation is not simply the reconciliation of foreign, modernizing influences with traditional or indigenous ones, a task for which secular Hinduism seems relatively well equipped, but of negotiating multiple indigenous inheritances in the context of an inevitable, but contested, shared modernity. As such, some sort of separation between the public and the private is both necessary and profoundly problematic.

This is true in Western nations as much as in postcolonial ones. The separation of the public and the private is understood and embraced within the ideology of a liberal democracy, which conceives of differences, such as gender and religion, as operative only within the private sphere and thus irrelevant for legal purposes.[23] Indeed, liberalism has always sought to "privatize" difference, even as, in its endorsement of institutions such as free speech and democratic government (a system that by definition enables private beliefs to be brought into public forums), it implicitly recognizes the impossibility of this project.[24] As a parliamentary democracy, then, a certain degree of separation between the spheres ought to be, by definition, a feature of contemporary Indian life as well. Certainly, India makes some provision for the allotment of individual rights, a process that envisions citizens as discrete, but essentially identical, units.[25] Even proponents of liberal individualism agree that the model of citizenship it offers has never been perfectly realized in practice. The model's inherent problems may be magnified in postcolonial contexts. Indeed, despite the centrality of the public–private divide to early imaginings of the Indian nation, Dipesh Chakrabarty goes so far as to argue that Indians have no private selves, even if some aspects of life are outside the direct purview of the government.[26] Nehru, too, saw collective identities as more important to Indians than individual ones.

The nation-state in India has thus been charged with the contradictory and appropriately postmodern tasks of constructing a viable, unifying political structure and, simultaneously, protecting difference in all of its various manifestations. Inevitably, tensions arise not only among India's many groups, but between the state and its nation(s) and the nation and its citizens; those who would seek to imagine India can only occupy shifting and uncertain ground.

Language

If print capitalism and nationalism are inexorably connected, as Anderson argues, then, by extension, particular languages ought to be particularly well suited to the enunciation of specific nationalist sentiments. Indeed, a number of nationalist movements, such as the one that led to Bangladesh's split from Pakistan, have explicitly defined their community in terms of a shared tongue and figured their political demands as a defense of that linguistic heritage. The Indian nation, however, lacks a single, unified, linguistic heritage, and the question of which language is best equipped to map out the space of the Indian nation has been contentious for at least a century.

While there can be no question that the use of English has served to forge a national elite, the impact of Macaulay's famous Minute of 1835—which

saw the introduction of English as an official language of education and administration in India—was less widespread than is often assumed. Printing in the Indian vernaculars blossomed far more than printing in English, and materials in the indigenous languages reached larger numbers of people than texts written in English. Indeed, it is at the regional level that print capitalism was most in evidence in India, a fact that is to be expected, given the intimate link between early print capitalism on the subcontinent and missionary activity.[27] Literacy in regional languages also increased more quickly than literacy in English.[28] As a result, it is difficult to pin down the relationship between an emerging sense of a linguistically derived cultural identity and a larger nationalist discourse.

Under the Mughals, Persian had been the language of administration, but it was not in common use. No official status was afforded to any vernacular. Most North Indian vernaculars bore the mark of the Prakrits (vernacular descendants of Sanskrit) as well as Persian and other languages. The Raj initially adopted Persian as its language of administration; later, in the first half of the nineteenth century, Urdu was adopted as the official language of a number of areas in North India.[29] Initially, the Raj's move was opposed by many educated Indians, who felt that Urdu was nothing more than a pidgin or creole.[30] The word "Urdu," meaning "horde," points to the language's status as a mixed or hybrid tongue.[31] The government responded by portraying Urdu as part of the valued cultural heritage of Muslims in North India, which the British administration wanted to foster and protect. In time, this view was accepted by the population, and by the 1860s, the same upper-class Muslim communities that had earlier objected to the adoption of Urdu objected to the official adoption of Hindi on the grounds that it would pose a threat to Muslim identity.

Anderson himself admits that those languages deemed to be "national" are often not widely used in their respective states, and that linguistic uniformity was no longer a key criterion for nationalism by the late nineteenth century.[32] Yet the need for a national language was keenly felt by most Indian nationalists both before and after independence in 1947. Though English had hardly overtaken the vernaculars in everyday communications, its use had become increasingly popular, as for "Indians from a variety of backgrounds," it represented "social mobility and choice."[33] Yet "to speak a foreign language . . . results in contamination of the very idea of nationalism."[34] Thus, even though the Indian National Congress functioned primarily in English (no other language would have permitted communication between elites from throughout the subcontinent), nationalists were often eager to disavow their own linguistic practices. Nehru, for instance, whose primary language was English, took on the study of Hindi and Urdu early

in the freedom struggle, acts he regarded as central to forging an identity as a secular Hindu.[35] Paradoxically, Gandhi made his case for the use of Indian languages in a speech delivered in English, arguing that India's true freedom hinged on the Indian cultural elites' abandonment of English.[36] Indeed, the use of a foreign language—particularly that of the colonial power—poses a threat to identity itself, as "national identity comes to us in the language in which we learn to articulate our most primitive demands."[37] What exactly would replace English, however, was the subject of considerable disagreement. Hindi/Hindustani was usually posited as the most appropriate choice, but the choice was a highly problematic one.

At the level of common speech (often called "bazaar" language), both Hindi and Urdu share a vocabulary and are mutually intelligible. Hindi, however, is written in the Devanagari script, used for Sanskrit, while Urdu is written in the Persian script. In the literary idiom, Hindi borrows from Sanskrit, and Urdu borrows from Persian, to a degree that, at this level, the two languages are no longer mutually intelligible.[38] Yet Sanskrit and Persian have influenced both languages, such that it is not unusual for a particular idiom to be described as "Sanskritized Urdu" or "Persianized Hindi." Indeed, though they are separately named, it would be more apt to consider Hindi and Urdu in terms of a spectrum of language usage rather than in terms of distinct tongues. Nehru, for instance, defined "Hindi-Urdu" as "one language with two literary forms and two scripts. As spoken there is hardly any difference; as written, especially in literary style, the gap widens."[39]

Where the two languages differ most significantly is in terms of iconic status. The Devanagari script is that of Hinduism's sacred texts, and it is therefore emblematic of that religion in general and Brahmanism in particular. Conversely, the Urdu script has its origins in Arabic, the language of the Koran. Robert King summarizes the relationship in succinct proportional format:[40]

Hindi:Hindu:Hinduism = Urdu:Muslim:Islam

Language has always had social and political significance in India, with literacy as the traditional prerogative of Brahmins and leaders of other religious groups.[41] Contrary to Anderson's model, the notion that "a particular script-language offered privileged access to ontological truth" was not wholly abandoned in the modern period.[42] Indeed, even among the early proponents of Hindi, there was no consensus concerning the choice of script.

Since the vast majority of Hindus and Muslims were illiterate in the early twentieth century, the question of which script to use could hardly have

had much bearing on the religious or cultural identities of most North Indians. Urdu became a matter of identity for Muslims in British India largely owing to their status as the ruled rather than the rulers. Hindus in North India began to emphasize Hindi in response.[43] Emphasis on regional languages also increased steadily.

In the wake of Partition, communal feelings were often manifested at the official level in terms of language issues. Language thus became a surrogate for issues of religion, race, and ethnicity.[44] While prior to Partition the Congress had proposed that Hindustani (a term covering both Hindi and Urdu) should be the official language of the new India, after Partition, Hindi, written in the Devanagari script, was adopted instead with very little debate.[45] The processes of Sanskritization and Persianization became more marked and accelerated rapidly in India and Pakistan, respectively. All India Radio, for instance, employed an idiom so Sanskritized that Nehru frequently complained that he could not understand their broadcasts—even those of his own speeches.[46] By exploiting the events of partition and emphasizing Hindi, politicians sought to consolidate the traditionally decentralized "Hindu" identity.[47] Hinduism lacks any central religious authority and encompasses a wide variety of beliefs and practices. Some scholars even argue that the term "Hinduism" was actually a false construct misapplied to India's diverse spiritual expressions by European orientalists.[48] Regional and caste differences also hinder any attempt to construct a cohesive Hindu community.

Language evades some of these difficulties to some extent: Hindi is widely spoken in North India and is closely related to a number of other northern languages, such as Gujarati. At the same time, nationalists were not unaware of the controversy that could ensue if linguistic usages were to be imposed. For Nehru,

> [the] imperatives of the nationalist struggle . . . underlined the need for a national language to substitute the colonial language. On the other hand, the lingual plurality of the country had also to be reckoned with.[49]

The reality of linguistic multiplicity, coupled with early resistance from the Dravidian South—where the imposition of Hindi was viewed as an attempt to entrench the preferential position of the North and its inhabitants within the nation-state—ultimately ensured that English remained a national language, along with Hindi.[50] Though much has been done since the time of independence to promote the use of Hindi as well as the regional languages, English continues to be widely used for official purposes, and, in addition, occupies a prominent position within India as a language of scientific, business, and cultural endeavors.[51]

The Indian Novel

Whatever the nationalist uncertainty surrounding the use of English in twentieth-century India, the emergence of literature in English on the subcontinent (and the appropriation of European literary forms) did have a strong nationalist aspect[52] and has been intimately linked to Indian national aspirations virtually since its inception.[53] At the same time, given that the notion of nation as an imagined community implicitly privileges articulations of national identity in creative media, it should be no surprise that advocates of Hindi have repeatedly called upon Indian writers to work exclusively in that language and have been publicly critical of those working in English.[54] Indeed, the novel in English is certainly not the only possible outlet for imaginings of the nation. The Bombay[55] film industry also claims "to have functioned as a de facto arm of state in generating through affect and consent a national unity in diversity that the postcolonial state had been markedly unsuccessful at achieving through its own institutions."[56]

Anderson, Timothy Brennan, and Fredric Jameson converge somewhat in their view of the novel as a national artifact. The novel was introduced to India by the colonizing Europeans, who, according to Anderson's schema, also brought a notion of time as linear and empty.[57] Chatterjee takes a similar stance on time in his study of Bengali historiography, which documents the move from almost mythical accounts of gods and kings in the prenationalist period to recognizable forms of modern historiography.[58] The capacity of the novel to objectify "the 'one, yet many' of national life" made it as attractive to India's anglicized elite as it had proven to be to Europeans.[59] The novel also provides a way of bringing into play the private and public domains that, as discussed earlier, nationalism inevitably creates.[60] While this monograph emphasizes the novel's status as a national(ist) artifact, I wish to stress that this is not its only possible function; I do not accede to Jameson's contested claims about national allegory and third-world literature. The nation is not the only appropriate subject for any given literature, but is surely an important one in the current context of uncertainty about the nature of democracy and the role of the state in the face of competing values and cultural claims.[61] Like Ahmad, I am uncomfortable with the category "third world" and the endorsement of essentialism it implies.[62]

Mine is not the first study to consider questions of nationalism in Indian literature in English; however, I break new ground in several ways. No detailed consideration has previously been given either to Nehru's own writings or to the impact his work has had on other authors. Furthermore, several major political upheavals have affected India in the last thirty years.

The suspension of democracy for eighteen months from 1975 to 1977, the rise of the Hindu Right, and economic deregulation have all had a profound impact on the intellectual and political landscape and necessitate a reconsideration of older nationalist paradigms.[63]

This book emphasizes the ways in which narratives of the nation are necessarily challenged to imagine the nation as diverse, either by seeking out new languages of imagined tolerance and accommodation or by probing the fate of those subjects who are not the nation's normative citizens—women, subalterns, and non-Hindus, among others. I argue for the novel's capacity to act as a space for these sorts of negotiations irrespective of the generic niche occupied by a given novel. It has repeatedly been contended that magical realism offers privileged access to non-Western cultures as compared with other forms of prose narrative.[64] If, as Bakhtin maintains, the novel is an inherently dialogical form, then neither recourse to myth nor the use of a particular idiom is necessary for the creation of a polyglot text.[65] As such, there is no reason to assume that realist narrative is necessarily hegemonic and incapable of incorporating diverse perspectives.

Furthermore, though I have chosen to focus on issues of national identity, I do not wish to contend either that the fictional texts I have chosen are representative of Indian literature generally or that they are *only* national allegories. Such a claim could hardly do justice to the richness and complexity of the writings of any of the authors under consideration. Arguably, no writer can ever be truly representative, and the seven writers I have chosen are certainly no exception.

The desire to articulate a national vision and the corresponding need to construct a national canon have, however, led critics to place considerable emphasis on the question of representation and who may speak for whom. Samares C. Sanyal, for instance, divides Indian writers, rather perplexingly, into "native talents" and "native aliens."[66] Also, some writers have been claimed by both India and Pakistan, on the basis of a mixture of geographic, religious, and cultural criteria—Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, for example.[67] It is not my aim to determine whether a writer such as Salman Rushdie is best considered a national or diasporic writer or to give a detailed analysis of the relationship between these two categories. The seven writers whom I discuss—Nehru, Vikram Seth, Rushdie, Nayantara Sahgal, Arundhati Roy, Ruchir Joshi, and Rupa Bajwa—portray the Indian nation in its diversity, and it is on their contributions to this task of constructing an imagined community that I would like to focus.

I begin my study with an examination of Nehru's *The Discovery of India,* a work that demonstrates that multiculturalism as a political ideal in India actually predates the vogue of the term in the West. This fact is also evident

from the legal-political documents of the era, particularly in the work of the Constituent Assembly, which would eventually frame a constitution for independent India. As Khilnani points out, in the late 1940s Nehru's vision

> was certainly not a standard way to envisage a new state. There were few models, from either European or any other history, that could be used to help focus India's assorted diversities into a political structure grounded upon a democratic principle.[68]

Though not a theoretical piece in a strict sense, *The Discovery of India* is perhaps the clearest explication available of the historical, political, and ethical basis for constructing independent India as an inclusive liberal democracy. It is both descriptive and prescriptive, and offers a remarkably comprehensive and useful insight into the ideological underpinnings of the first twenty years of Indian self-government.

Nehru's ideas have been subject to much criticism by Indian intellectuals since the 1970s, who point to the current political situation as proof of Nehru's essential failure.[69] Nevertheless, his legacy continues to have a profound impact both on critics, such as Khilnani himself, who advocate returning to a Nehruvian model of nationhood, and writers, for whom Nehru's texts are the source of a simultaneously powerful and problematic vocabulary for coming to terms with the modern Indian state. In chapters 2–7, I examine both the debt that Seth, Rushdie, Sahgal, Roy, Joshi, and Bajwa owe Nehru in their engagements with the nation as a multicultural construct in their work, and the challenges to Nehru their ideas pose. Despite differences in form and genre, all these writers are participants in the same ongoing dialogue concerning the past, present, and future of the Indian nation-state.

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CHAPTER 1

Compromise and Contradiction in Jawaharlal Nehru's Multicultural Indian Nation

This chapter examines Nehru's attempt to imagine and define the nation over which he would eventually preside, an effort whose goal was to create "a public vocabulary through which Indians could talk to one another as Indians."[1] In order for India to come into being as a modern nation, it was necessary not simply to argue for its existence by geographical or cultural exclusion, but to create an identity that a community of individuals would be willing and able to articulate. Though the strategies Nehru utilizes in this ambitious project are numerous and intersecting, I argue that they can be roughly divided into two main movements, both of which are interwoven throughout his written work. On the one hand, Nehru attempts to read the Indian nation from the landscape—topographical and cultural—of the subcontinent. In so doing he explores and employs a range of metaphors and symbols in an attempt to describe a community that, according to the norms of nationalist discourse, must be regarded as existing a priori even while it is in the process of conscious self-construction. On the other hand, Nehru constructs a history of his imagined community that simultaneously inscribes and celebrates the value of cultural diversity in the Indian context.

First, I briefly describe and contextualize Nehru's writings with particular attention to *The Discovery of India*—a text that, as its name suggests, is importantly concerned with the construction of an imagined national space—and present an overview of the relevant criticism. Despite the seminal role that Nehru and his ideology have played in the contemporary political configuration of the Indian subcontinent, his writings have received remarkably little critical attention. Such neglect surely deserves investigation. Next,

I probe his construction of India's history by emphasizing the vocabulary he uses to imagine India as a discrete nation, united in its diversity, and by reading his narration of key historical moments in the Indian past: early Aryan settlement, the arrival and rise of the Mughals, the revolt of 1857, and the provincial elections of 1935, which gave the Congress party and India its first taste of modern, democratic government.

Situating Nehru and His Writings

Nehru grew up in a family that was among the most anglicized in India.[2] Macaulay's Minute—which sought to facilitate British rule by creating "a class of persons . . . Indian in colour and blood but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect"—had clearly succeeded where the Nehrus were concerned, at least in matters of taste and linguistic usage.[3] Nehru's education at Harrow and Cambridge confirmed his membership of English society. Yet, even as Nehru was engaging happily in his studies and entertaining the possibility of a career in the colonial service, he was beginning to question his place, and India's, within the colonial enterprise. The letters he wrote to his father as a teenager studying in England reveal a nascent political consciousness that is firmly nationalist, and a distinct antipathy toward the British in India, which contrasts with his relative comfort with England itself.[4]

Indeed, Nehru would always have an affinity for British life, which manifested itself in, among other things, the reading he did in order to write *The Discovery of India.* His belief in democracy, secularism, and individualism, for instance, and his desire to see these ideals realized in India, owes much to this colonial heritage. This apparent contradiction prefigures what is perhaps Nehru's most stinging criticism of the Raj in *The Discovery of India*—that it is both anti-British and antimodern. The validity of this argument rests on Nehru's self-positioning as a true arbiter of both Britishness and modernity. Nehru requires the reader to accept his intimacy with the things he critiques, even while he underlines his own critical distance.

Nehru was well aware that his audience was not likely to be exclusively, or even predominantly, Indian. *An Autobiography* had "made the first dent in the psychological barrier between the British intelligentsia and Indian nationalists since Gandhi's entry into Indian politics in 1920."[5] *The Discovery of India* was also well received abroad, though it was perhaps less politically significant to the British than either of his previous works, of which *An Autobiography* and *Glimpses of World History* are the most notable.[6] Nehru's refusal to demonize the British in *The Discovery of India,* and his insistence

that their primary fault lies in a failure to live up to their own ideals, reflects not only his own idealism and generosity of spirit but his sharp political acumen; he was well aware that *The Discovery of India* could expect a British audience, and that these readers' views could significantly impact the progress of the nationalist cause. At the same time, Nehru's respect for the British reflects his identification with them, even as he opposes them, something characteristic of the "double-vision" of colonial discourse.[7]

As an activist, Nehru had to combat any potential criticism from his opponents that he was not, in fact, equipped to represent the nation and that, consequently, his version of India was not to be preferred to that of, for instance, M. K. Gandhi or M. A. Jinnah. In an odd, but perhaps inevitable, reversal, the colonial regime, which had purposefully sought to create families such as the Nehrus in order to secure its own legitimacy on the subcontinent, sought to delegitimize them as soon as they began to pose a serious political threat. In addition, his political goals threatened the interests of other members of the indigenous elite, and hence he felt compelled to ground his beliefs in a degree of selflessness. Of course, Nehru also hoped to convince a large portion of the population that he was indeed their sympathetic representative. From the outset, however, Nehru admits that his approach to India was that of "an alien critic . . . a friendly westerner" (DI 50). Equally, he is uncertain as to whether he really knows the country, and expresses a desire to discover its material realities as well as its essence. If, as a nationalist leader, it was his goal and function to speak for the nation, it was surely necessary for him to be of the nation. *The Discovery of India* must therefore locate the author within national discourse even as it attempts to construct that discourse.

By any measure, *The Discovery of India* is a remarkable achievement and it offers what is almost certainly the most comprehensive portrait of the political and personal ideas that were to dominate Indian politics during the following two decades. It was written over a two-year period while Nehru was captive in Ahmednagar Prison, having been jailed by the Raj for his political activities. If, as Amit Chaudhuri claims, contemporary Indian novelists are prone to representing the nation as "a huge baggy monster," they may claim as their antecedent the architect of the nation itself, whose representation of India, if not a novel, is certainly similarly worthy of Chaudhuri's description.[8] Indeed, Chaudhuri labels *Midnight's Children,* perhaps the most famous national allegory of monumental scale, "a Nehruvian epic," suggesting that Nehru is still an important influence on creative writers, even if critics pay him minimal attention.[9]

One reason for its neglect is the fact that *The Discovery of India* does not lend itself easily to any one critical approach. Part history, part autobiography,

and part manifesto, the text owes much of the limited critical attention it has received to considerations of its generic status. Vinay Lal asserts that "[i]t is as works of history that Nehru's major books are most easily appropriated."[10] In contrast, John B. Alphonso-Karkala has argued that "Jawaharlal was obviously not writing history," and claims that he is one of a group of writers preoccupied with historical themes (such as Shakespeare and Homer) whose works reflect a process of "transcribing their perceptions of historical events under heightened awareness with aesthetic sensibilities."[11] Mohan Ramanan classifies *The Discovery of India* as an autobiography, though he does argue for an expansion of this category.[12] Subhash Chandra Narula attempts a compromise, arguing that Nehru's "style elevates history and topicality of events and personages to a level that his writing can be read like another genre of literature."[13]

I want to suggest that the text's generic status, though ambiguous, is not as troubling as previous critics seem to believe. If, as Hayden White maintains, there is no significant difference in form between the novel and history writing, how much more problematic is the distinction between history and autobiography, for both purport to deal with "real," rather than imagined, events.[14] Indeed, it is a truism that "the autobiographer borrows the models and devices of historiography."[15]

Nehru himself was keenly aware of the conflicts and complications of his project. He articulates his deeply personal relationship with the subject matter early in *The Discovery of India:* "I came late to history and, even then, not through the usual and direct road of learning a mass of facts and dates and drawing conclusions and inferences, unrelated to my life's course . . . I felt also that the whole of the past belonged to me" (DI 23). He further confesses that his view of India "was often an emotional one, conditioned and limited in many ways," and "took the form of nationalism" (DI 52). Nehru thus makes explicit his political agenda, yet at the same time displays a yearning for objectivity, a neutrality of perspective that he himself knows to be impossible. Nationalism is, by definition, deeply implicated in non-rationalistic modes of thought.[16]

Nehru's distinctive approach and impressive degree of self-consciousness are assets and key attributes, not faults, of the text, whose merits should be readily comprehensible from the perspective of postmodern historiography.[17] Indeed, the text's lack of unity may well reflect his uneasiness with the very unity in diversity that *The Discovery of India* is designed to perform. He saw the need for a "fiction" "to bind together the 'multitudinous past of innumerable successions of human beings' into the shared history of a single political community."[18] This unity in diversity is also evident in the prevalence of intertexts; *The Discovery of India* draws on a bewildering

array of textual influences. Nehru's historical sources are almost exclusively works by Anglo-American scholars whose canonical status is evident from the presses in which they were published.[19] This fact is perhaps what has led some critics to the belief that Nehru's text is no more than a "selective appropriation of the notions of the Orientalists."[20] Certainly, many of the most laudatory remarks on India and its culture are drawn from Western scholarship.[21] Yet *The Discovery of India* also bears the mark of Indian writers such as Rabindranath Tagore, whom Nehru praises but never cites (DI 340). Nehru's notions of adjustment and his view of the nation as ecological (which I will discuss in chapter 5) have their antecedent in the opening lines of Tagore's essay "A Vision of India's History."[22] With its emphasis on harmony and order, *The Discovery of India* also resembles the indigenous tradition of writing local histories. In this it stands apart from mainstream Western historiography, which privileges narratives of conflict and disruption.[23] At the same time, Nehru's unacknowledged reliance on Tagore points to an uneasy elitism and Hindu-centrism that lurks beneath the text's surface.

Imagining Unity in Diversity

"India" was the subject of competing mythologies, with the struggle for linguistic mastery over this illusive construct coinciding directly with the literal and figurative battle to rule the subcontinent. Indeed, it was a common ploy for those in favor of a continued British presence in South Asia to deny that there was any such entity at all as India, arguing that it was an empty signifier. John Stratchey, for instance, avers that "there is not, and never was an India, nor ever any country of India."[24] Even my use of the term "India" to discuss the places and spaces that concern Nehru is highly problematic. Firstly, the modern nation-state that bears the name "India" needs to be distinguished from the vague agglomeration of South Asian British colonies and British-influenced states that the term encompassed before 1947. I take colonial India to refer both to the British administered areas and to the so-called princely states, where British colonial power took a somewhat different form. Geographically, this is essentially Nehru's India.

By the time Nehru took up his pen in Ahmednagar jail, "India" had already acquired a myriad of connotations and associations that had little or nothing to do with geographic or political boundaries. Orientalist scholarship had transformed "India" into an overdetermined signifier, whose role in modes of Western thought has been extensively studied.[25] *The Discovery of India* both promises the reader the revelation of an authentic India and satirizes that very possibility, since, by the 1940s, India was, if anything,

the subject of excessive rather than insufficient study. The notion of discovery is intimately linked with colonial ideology, with all its attendant connotations of mapping, explication, and possession. Discovery not only connotes "exploration" and "investigation" but is also associated with the process of claiming mining rights and, therefore, with possession and exploitation.

Despite this ambivalence, discovery is "a major theme in nationalist history" and has become a distinct trope for South Asian prose writings in the postcolonial period.[26] Indeed, the potential ambiguity in the nature of nationalist discourse of discovery corresponds to the uncertainty latent in the very subject of study—India itself. What made India a subject of both particular interest and anxiety, enabling outright denials of its existence such as Stratchey's, was its lack of obvious linguistic or religious demarcation. Rather than erasing India's heterogeneity, thereby acceding to homogenizing definitions of the nation (according to Anderson, a marked tendency of nationalist discourse), Nehru's account of the nation centers, and makes a fundamental virtue of, that very diversity. There are three key terms through which Nehru attempts to reconcile the demands of an ethical recognition of the subcontinent's multiplicity and an urgent, anticolonial nationalism: indigenization, Indianization, and, what has now become a catchphrase, "unity in diversity"—a phrase also used by Gandhi—all three of which will be explored in this chapter.[27] The last is a state of being, which the former two processes help bring about. Indigenization and Indianization are thus located as historically recognizable (though natural) events, while unity in diversity acquires an air of transcendence.

Nehru essentializes unity in diversity by associating it with India's mythic origins. He describes the ancient Indians as

> a light-hearted race, confident and proud of their traditions, dabbling in the search for the mysterious, full of questions addressed to nature and human life, attaching importance to the standards and values they had created, but taking life easily and joyously.
>
> (DI 119)

This golden age is located somewhere in the distant past, about which, Nehru acknowledges, little is known. The line between history and legend is blurred, enabling the author to position the Indian heritage of cultural diversity as simultaneously historical and cultural in a broader sense. Religious harmony is posited as the natural state that characterizes the past and under which Indian civilization ought to exist. The hybrid Indian culture is both a result and an aspect of the "environment" (DI 257).

Nehru turns first to the civilization of the Indus Valley, which is arguably the very beginning of Indian history since it is the earliest period for which there is significant archeological evidence. This area, by Nehru's time, had long been synonymous with Aryan culture, though most archeologists believe that the Indus Valley settlement was inhabited primarily by Dravidians.[28] In locating the origin of the modern nation in this ancient enclave of advanced civilization, Nehru implicitly places India on an equal footing with Western culture, the heir of ancient Greece and Rome, indicating from the outset that he intends to construct a Hindu classicist narrative.

Much more is clearly at stake, however; Nehru's references to the Indus Valley civilization also raise a number of issues of more direct interest to his political agenda. Not only does the author ground his endorsement of multiculturalism in his reading of Mohenjodaro, but he locates the justification for socialism there as well. Unlike the other civilizations of the ancient world, the Indus Valley is shown to have privileged the common man over the elite, and "the finest structures" among the ruins "are those erected for the convenience of the citizens" (DI 71). This is surely a fortuitous coincidence for Nehru, as it transforms his beloved socialism from a foreign and Western concept into an indigenous one.

Far more problematic are the author's attempts to portray Mohenjodaro as multicultural. Almost by definition, cultural attitudes and practices leave less evidence than public works projects, and so there is greater room for, and need of, speculation in discussing these issues. The author states that Mohenjodaro was, "surprisingly enough, a predominantly secular civilization," without either offering any evidence for, or elaborating on, this claim (DI 70). It is important, in order to contextualize Nehru's argument, to briefly define and distinguish between the terms "secular," "secularism," and "secularization."[29] The secular refers simply to that which is of the world; traditionally, it is that which is not sacred. Originally, as a term, it denoted life outside the walls of the monastery, that which was not enveloped in religious seclusion. As such it includes art and literature, as well as the mundane affairs of everyday life. Secularism, on the other hand, is a much more modern term and refers to the belief that the sacred and the profane are and ought to be distinct and separate. As such, it is different from the original sense of the secular, which held that the realm of the spiritual extended beyond the monastery walls and did not recognize a sharp dividing line isolating the spiritual from the material.

Secularism usually entails the belief that religion (and, hence, spirituality) is an essentially private matter, apart from other earthly concerns, and ought to be kept out of the public domain. This separation is seen as an intrinsic

good. Secularization is the process whereby the detachment of the spiritual from the public is achieved, and it is implicitly deemed progressive, with the secularized society existing at a more advanced state of evolution than the nonsecularized. Secularism and secularization are recent concepts and are not without their Eurocentric overtones, for it is in Western nations that secularism is usually seen to have originated and been achieved. This is constructed by the West as part of its inherent superiority. Unlike the secular, then, which is a far more universal concept, shades of Orientalism haunt secularism and its processes.[30]

Nehru's claim that Mohenjodaro was secular is not therefore unexpected, since a concern for worldly affairs is neither at odds with conventional understandings of the ancient world nor foreign to the ancient Hindu texts.[31] What limited archeological evidence there is suggests that Mohenjodaro was a center for trade and the arts, and not a monastic settlement. At the time *The Discovery of India* was written, however, the term "secular" had become firmly associated with the twin ideologies of secularism and secularization. Secularism does seem out of place in Mohenjodaro, and the author (and the reader) might well be astonished to find it there. The surprise Nehru feigns is thus a verbal sleight of hand, a manipulation of meaning designed to insinuate his own ideology into the very beginnings of Indian history, implicitly laying the foundations for his vision of a modern, social democratic nation.

Nehru's insistence on the essentially secular nature of Indian culture is in direct contradiction to the view espoused by religious separatists, such as the leader of the Muslim League, Jinnah. For him, both Hinduism and Islam

> are definite social codes which govern not so much man's relation with his God, as man's relation with his neighbour. They govern not only his law and culture, but every aspect of his social life, and such religions, essentially exclusive, completely preclude that merging of identity and unity of thought on which Western democracy is based.[32]

As such, Jinnah's rejection of secularism is even more complete than that of Gandhi, who, despite his belief that private ideals should be lived in the public sphere, defined religion as "a personal concern and a matter between man and god."[33] Both men rejected democracy, however, though Gandhi held that majority rule left open the possibility of immoral government rather than made it an inevitability, as Jinnah seems to suggest.[34] They were not alone in this. Subhas Chandra Bose, an oft-neglected but important nationalist leader, who will be discussed further in chapter 6, shared this view. Nehru's "discovery" of democracy in India's classical past serves to

rebuff not only his political opponents but also his own colleagues within the Congress party.

Nehru's penchant for classicism is very much in keeping with the nationalist project, which needed to both justify and historicize its own political ambitions.[35] Nationalist classicism opposes colonial classicizing discourses, however, in that it seeks to conceive of ancient civilizations as alive, rather than dead, in emphasizing the connection between the land's ancient and contemporary inhabitants.[36] Nehru supports his argument by quoting a noted British scholar of Sanskrit, Sir John Marshall, who also sees this continuity.[37] Yet this assertion is double-edged—the proximity of ancient and modern Hinduism might point just as convincingly to the backwardness of the modern form as to the enlightened nature of the ancient.

A reliance on classicism can also lead to a distortion of history that privileges certain kinds of identity. In India, the consequences of this are particularly problematic. Though Nehru rejects the British periodization of Indian history and its creation of distinct Hindu and Muslim eras, there can be no doubt that he is especially interested in ancient India (DI 237). The classical period precludes not only Indian Muslims per se, but Islam itself, and, by extension, their entire way of life. Any insistence on continuity between the Indus Valley civilization and contemporary South Asia inevitably made non-Hindus uneasy. It seems only natural that Indian Muslims should have begun constructing their own classical past, which, of necessity, looked beyond the boundaries of South Asia and toward a specifically Muslim community.

Yet Nehru was especially anxious to demonstrate that Indian Muslims were not only a part of, but indeed essential to, the nation. As such, his nationalist history required that both Islam (whose origins were undeniably outside the subcontinent) and Muslims (who had at least a theoretical possibility of prioritizing allegiances to the Middle East over those to their own region) be firmly grounded in the local, while minimizing Islam's potential transnational pull. The many other nonlocal influences that Nehru embraced—from the English language to the development of heavy industry—also needed justification. Indigenization and Indianization were two key terms that Nehru used to describe the forging of India as a distinctive nation out of an admittedly heterogeneous mixture of cultures, languages, religions, and ethnicities. Of the two terms, indigenization is, for our purposes, the less problematic. Nehru was one of the first to use the term, which refers to the act of making something native. For Nehru, it describes the process whereby cultural artifacts (such as languages and customs) are incorporated into a preexisting civilization. English, for Nehru, is therefore not to be regarded as a foreign language, because Indians have appropriated it and made it their

own. The same logic is applied to elements of material culture, including industrial machinery. Indianization is a subset of indigenization, which pertains to the indigenization of groups and individuals.

"Indianization" first entered political life prior to Nehru. During the nineteenth century, the Raj operated a policy of reserving the most prestigious positions in the army and the civil service for Europeans, confining Indians, who made up the majority of the workforce, to positions of limited power and responsibility. The indigenous upper classes naturally took exception to this, and it was an early rallying point for the Indian National Congress. What the agitators requested, and the British government eventually (but partially) conceded, was the Indianization of these branches of government. As a concept, then, Indianization is closely linked to a narrative of colonialism, power, and privilege. Nehru himself uses the term in a similar way (DI 443). Yet, Indianization, in the context of Nehru's understanding of precolonial history, denotes a process whose dynamic is diametrically opposed to this. In precolonial times, the "invaders," in Nehru's schema, are absorbed, whether they will it or not, into the culture over which they rule. In colonial India, the "natives" assimilate into the culture of the colonizers and still must come begging at the halls of power.

The singularity of Britain as a colonizing power is its resistance to Indianization, as Nehru chooses to understand it (DI 302). Yet the question of national identity in the subcontinent at midcentury was very much linked to questions of privilege and government, a connection which is subsumed, but still present, in the text. The Parsi community is advanced as an exemplary case of Indianization because Parsis "have quietly and unostentatiously fitted into India, made it their home and yet kept quite apart as a community" (DI 149). Nehru praises the disinclination on the part of the Parsis to engage with the discourses of either political or cultural power. Implicitly, they are offered as a contrast and a model to the subcontinent's Muslims, many of whom rejected not only quietism but also the prospect of minority status.

Nehru first uses Indianization to refer to cultural assimilation as distinct from religious conversion (DI 76). Indianization can also have a distinctly ethnic aspect when applied to particular groups; both the Afghans and the Pathans became Indianized, in Nehru's view, a process from which both the "foreign" and the "native" drew cultural benefits (DI 137, 238). As such he distinguishes it from the process of "absorption," which he uses to account for the near disappearance of both Buddhism and Jainism in India (DI 179). Indianization is thus a process of cultural assimilation that affects both individuals and groups, and whose relationship to religion is decidedly ambiguous.

Nehru elucidates his notion of Indianization primarily through his discussion of the Mughals. As T. N. Madan has shown, it was essential for the Mughals, as for any foreign conqueror, to adapt themselves to some extent to the local society in order to ensure the continuity of their rule.[38] Indianization, however, is far more than a necessary assimilation. On the contrary, Nehru wishes to suggest that Muslims and Hindus not only accepted but embraced each other. As such, he draws our attention to interreligious marriages among the nobility, though he must admit that these events "were not frequent" (DI 241). Gandhi, in contrast, opposed intermarriage, claiming that it would foster, rather than allay, communal suspicions.[39] Nehru also points out the respect accorded to Indian culture by Muslim intellectuals. A number of Muslim-ruled kingdoms are offered as laudable examples of tolerance, in which an elite, hybrid culture flourished, as demonstrated by their production of art and literature (DI 244). This cultural creativity is implicitly contrasted with the "cultural poverty" that initially greeted the Mughals in North India (DI 258). The adoption of Hindi by Muslim writers is also cited as an index of their cultural incorporation.

This synthesis was possible, according to Nehru, because Muslims accepted, and became a part of, the culture of the subcontinent, even as they helped to transform it. The Mughals "toned down" their cultural difference "as a deliberate policy" and "tried to function . . . as Indians." Among the masses, as well, the "Indian environment" worked its magic (DI 257). Given Nehru's emphasis on the Mughals, it seems that he is referring to North India rather than the subcontinent as a whole, but this is not always made clear. The corresponding absorption of Muslim culture by Hindus, however, is depicted as nearly involuntary. Though they underwent "a hardly conscious approach towards these foreign ways both in thought and in life," they also "became more rigid and exclusive" (DI 242), though many of the Rajput princes, reputed for their pride, became loyal to Akbar (DI 259). Furthermore, despite the fact that they were never unified and often fought among one another, the region's Hindus are always already Indian. As such, Indianization carries with it the suggestion of assimilation and the loss of cultural identity that this entails. What was good and practical for the region as a whole was then potentially threatening to Muslim cultural distinctiveness. Whereas Muslims are depicted as having actively sought synthesis, Hindus are shown, at best, to have passively succumbed to its inevitability (DI 265).

In time, according to Nehru, the Mughals came to regard "India as their homeland, and the rest of the world as foreign" (DI 241). One becomes Indian if one does not regard oneself as living in exile; as such, it is a deeply

modern condition tied up with the assertion of an individual subjectivity. This is an inclusive conception of Indianness, for it subsumes objective markers of identity and allows entry into the state for anyone who desires it. At the same time, it cannot be forced (DI 526). The culmination of this process is Akbar, in whom “the old dream of a united India again took shape, united not only politically in one state but organically fused into one people” (DI 259). In contrast, the breakup of the Mughal empire is attributed to Aurangzeb’s tendency to “function more as a Moslem than an Indian ruler” (DI 265).

In focusing on the Mughals, Nehru glosses over the status of the majority of contemporary South Asian Muslims, whose ancestors were not the invading Mughals but indigenous converts, often from the Hindu lower castes, and, as a result, never looked upon the region as foreign and yet, owing to their religion, maintained a distinctive worldview. The mixed culture he describes “originated in court circles and spread in the cities and urban areas,” and as such includes only a small minority of the South Asian populace (DI 244). It was based on mutual respect and shared class values, which found expression in the creative arts. What is less clear is the process whereby some form of mutual accommodation was achieved in rural and lower-class settings. Any attempt to come to an understanding of this other reality faces all the challenges inherent in subaltern studies. There is broad agreement, however, that India’s rural Muslims were, in general, imperfectly Islamicized.

Though a significant segment of the nonelite population of Nehru’s day considered themselves Muslim and embraced key Islamic religious practices, these coexisted along with traditions that were doubtless of Hindu origin. The Khoja Muslims of Gujarat, for instance, celebrate the arrival of spring, a custom practiced by many Hindus but rejected by other Muslim sects.[40] Many rural Muslims also combined their belief in Allah with the worship of local deities.[41] The more orthodox (primarily upper- and middle-class) Muslim population looked down on these practices as unorthodox and in need of correction. Nehru, on the other hand, praises these hybrid communities; the more Hindu practices a given sect or community has maintained, the greater his endorsement. His own use of Hindu mythology as a point of contact between the rural and the urban illustrates this tension—while, as he maintains in *The Discovery of India,* it probably had a certain measure of effectiveness among subaltern Indians of all faiths, it only served to reinforce the worst fears of middle-class Muslims. The notion of unity in diversity, though historically present at all levels of Indian society, thus takes radically different and antagonistic forms.

Nehru draws on the fact that "the nation . . . is also a form of self-consciousness," while de-emphasizing the myth of objective homogeneity, which usually accompanies it.[42] The notion that "choice is destiny," while potentially affirmative in the context of an individualistic ideology, has several problems in the Indian context, which Nehru must then proceed to combat.[43] In the context of the caste system, genealogy may influence an individual's destiny at least as much as choice. *The Discovery of India* devotes a section to this phenomenon; other descriptions of Indian society as less individualistic than the West are scattered throughout the text (DI 245–248). This approach is not without its problems, however, due to the possibility of multiple and competing loyalties.

In *The Discovery of India,* national identity is effectively disentangled from other forms of identity. Furthermore, it is clear that Nehru does not consider all choices to be equally valid, a fact that becomes abundantly clear when one considers his stance on the issue of Pakistan. Individuals are not simply free to choose the nation; in Nehru's schema they are positively required to do so. The two-nation theory is constructed as ontologically false since there are more than two religions practiced in India, and neither of the two largest was traditionally a model of monolithic orthodoxy (DI 392). "Indian identity," according to Nehru, "could emerge only within the territorial and institutional frame of the state."[44] Thus, in *The Discovery of India,* there is an irresolvable tension between individual choice and historical contingency.

Given that nationalism requires a myth of community, it inevitably has recourse to culture in one form or another—the nation must be more than an empty signifier if nationalism is to have any force. Indeed, Nehru himself recognized that such empty signifiers were not only counterproductive but potentially dangerous: "We cannot just create a vacuum, or else that vacuum will fill itself up in a way that we may have to deplore" (DI 247). It is for this reason that the notion of shared history becomes so crucial—"[t]he past of India, with all its cultural variety and greatness, was a common heritage of all the Indian people" (DI 341).

Constructing a Shared History

More than half of *The Discovery of India* is devoted to the British, or colonial, period of Indian history. This fact is not merely a function of the proximity of these events to Nehru's own time, for this is the period of joint Hindu-Muslim subjection and a part of Indian history that both groups share. At the same time, communalism, Nehru's greatest foe, also arises in the modern period. In the remainder of this chapter, I would like

to examine two pivotal events in the shared history of the subcontinent and its history of communalism.

The mutiny (alternatively referred to as the first war of Indian independence) offers a key historical moment that has the potential to provide a basis for unity in diversity and, therefore, a founding national mythology, since both Hindus and Muslims participated in the revolt against British rule. It is a "war of Indian independence" and, as such, an important national moment (DI 323). At the same time, Nehru dismisses the revolt as essentially the last gasp of an already defeated and defunct feudal system, which is, therefore, antinational by definition (DI 324). It is, for him, an end and not a beginning.

Despite the inherent appeal of this event to any kind of nationalist historiography, Nehru devotes surprisingly little attention to it. Until 1944, accounts of the mutiny had been monopolized by pro-British historians, with Indian perspectives actively repressed by the ruling power (DI 345). As such, 1857 seems to cry out for nationalist revision. Yet Nehru's account is perhaps most notable for what it leaves out. The revolt is almost universally linked to allegations that the British were about to, or had introduced, a new type of cartridge, greased with animal fat (derived from either pigs or cows), which the soldier would have to bite in order to load his weapon.[45] The soldiers are said to have mutinied as a result of this religious affront. Nehru had surely heard this apocryphal account, yet it finds no place in his narrative.[46] Indeed, his approach to the events of 1857 is remarkably antiteleological, for he does not seem particularly concerned with underlying causes. The annexation of Oudh the year before, another event often cited as a trigger for the revolt, is similarly neglected.

Other accounts of the mutiny provide a useful counterpoint to Nehru's somewhat puzzling treatment. Akbar Ahmed, for instance, who, like Nehru, acknowledges the participation of Indians of all religions in both the defense of, and the fight against, the Raj, has a vastly different view. For him, 1857 signals "the end of Muslim history."[47] Muslim history is thus implicitly differentiated from the history of the Muslims in India, which continues past this date and of which Ahmed's book is clearly an acknowledgement. Regardless of whether or not one agrees with Ahmed, his position is illustrative. There is, of course, an elite bias here, for the majority of Hindus and Muslims before and after 1857 were only tangentially connected to those at the highest levels of power. It is questionable whether the events of 1857 brought about fundamental changes in the conduct of life in villages, in which most South Asians of all religions were situated. There is also an unabashed partisanship; religious history is not necessarily opposed to national history (Ahmed's book is, after all, an account of the

emergence of Pakistan), but the latter can never transcend the former. Nehru disagrees, of course; for him national history, as the history of unity in diversity, necessarily subsumes religious history.

Nehru's terse treatment of the mutiny, therefore, suggests a deliberate attempt to marginalize the presence of religion in India's public history. Both the somewhat folkloric story of the gun cartridges and the well-documented annexation of Oudh by the British point to religion and conquest as having motivated the revolt and thus enable potentially divisive readings of Indian history. This is not to say, however, that incorporating the revolt's religious underpinnings necessarily leads to a communal interpretation of its events. The annexation of Oudh, which involved the deposition of a Muslim leader, could be read in noncommunalist terms: after all, the prince in question exercised secular, not religious, authority. Indeed, though Khalid B. Sayeed also locates the revolt as an event with a specific meaning for Muslims within the framework of nineteenth-century India, he does not position it as definitive. Instead, he points out that the "Muslim role" in the mutiny is uncertain and leaves it virtually at that.[48]

The section in *The Discovery of India* that deals with the events of 1857—"The Great Revolt of 1857. Racialism"—focuses on the dangers of intolerance and discrimination. According to Nehru, divisions among different groups of Indians account for their failure to liberate the subcontinent from the colonizers, who were, after all, vastly outnumbered and dependent on the service of Indian mercenaries. The mutiny and its aftermath are thus an allegory of the dangers of Indian disunity. Failure to overthrow the British colonizers can, therefore, elliptically, be assigned to excessive reliance on premodern sources of identity—of which religion is presumably one—and social forms. At the same time, the emphasis on what Nehru terms "racialism" serves to refocus attention on the abuses of the British rulers. Unified in the eyes of the British by the color of their skin, Indians are affectively united through suffering. This racist violence is, according to Nehru, still a feature of British rule in the twentieth century, a fact that justifies and even demands nationalist resistance (DI 325).

The next historical moment that I will examine pertains to the Indian provincial elections of 1935, an event much closer to Nehru's time of writing and one with which he had been personally involved. The elections and their aftermath are often considered a turning point in the relationship between the Congress and the Muslim League. After these elections, there was a surge in popular support for the Muslim League, and any notion of reconciliation was increasingly banished from the minds of all parties. Though Nehru could not have been fully aware of the place that would be assigned to these elections by later historians, he certainly was acutely conscious of the growing

popularity of the Muslim League and of the allegations of misconduct leveled at the Congress by League supporters. The Indian National Congress was accused both of pursuing Hindu communalist policies while in office and of snubbing Muslims by failing to incorporate Muslim League representatives into the cabinet of the United Provinces (which was later to become a hotbed of Muslim separatism).[49] Nehru's hope of positioning his own political affiliations as inclusive depended at least partially on refuting these contentions. Insofar as the provincial Congress governments were viewed (both then and now) as a precursor of a Hindu-majority India, their performance can be (and, in fact, was) taken as an indicator of the limits and possibilities of tolerance and democracy on the subcontinent. Though these governments were limited in many ways (not least by interference from the Raj and by their extremely restricted franchise), they were an unprecedented experiment in modern self-rule and, as such, would inevitably play a substantial role in molding attitudes toward the Congress.

Even a cursory examination, however, of the scholarship relating to these events underlies the difficulty of drawing any coherent narrative from them. According to the data, whatever the rhetoric of communalism, Muslims could hardly have been said to be politically homogeneous, particularly in the controversial case of the United Provinces. Of the sixty-four seats reserved there for Muslims, the Muslim League won twenty-four, the Congress one, and the National Agricultural Party nine; independents captured the remaining thirty seats.[50] The predominance of independent candidates suggests the great diversity of views among enfranchised Muslims—a variety that could not easily be subsumed under any established party banner—and that voting may have been more closely influenced by local concerns than national ones. This fact has largely been ignored in scholarly discussions of communal politics.

Given Nehru's socialist leanings, it should be no surprise that he adopts a socioeconomic argument in order to explain the rise of Muslim separatism at midcentury. Nehru accepts the commonly held view that Hindus were, overall, "superior . . . in education, services, and industry, as well as in numbers" (DI 381). Muslims were held to be generally "backward," and some contemporary historians continue to ascribe Muslim separatism to uneven development.[51] This line of reasoning has been echoed in a number of contemporary scholarly works about communalism in North India. It is difficult, however, to find any clear evidence to support this view. Indeed, in the United Provinces, the heartland of the Muslim League, Muslims were, on average, slightly better educated and more prosperous than their Hindu contemporaries; conversely, in Bengal, where Muslims were in fact worse off than average, support for Pakistan was far less robust,

due to the preeminence of regional cultural affiliations.[52] Furthermore, the Muslim League focused on rallying support for the organization and never explicitly stated what its goals were, other than to represent the Muslim community.

For Nehru, "[m]odernism was not possible without universalism," and, as a result, he could only perceive communalism in general—and the Pakistan concept in particular, based as it was on religious exclusivism—as fundamentally antimodern.[53] He saw communalism as reminiscent of the British "social exclusiveness" that he and other Indian elites had suffered, and rejected (DI 295). An examination of the events surrounding the 1935 elections, however, reveals a far more complex picture. Nehru begins "Congress Governments in the provinces" with a description of the inadequacies and frustrations of the 1935 Government of India Act, which was introduced to make the elections possible (DI 365). Even before these governments are mentioned, they are foregrounded as necessarily weak and barely effective. Any potential criticism of these governments is therefore diluted from the very outset.

The issue of coalition governments is discussed extensively, though in a somewhat indirect fashion. First, Nehru points out that in those provinces where the Congress did form governments, it did so because it had a clear majority. The democratic nature of their stance is implicitly underlined. He also states that "some form of coalition was agreed to in the Frontier Provinces and in Assam" (DI 368). This is deliberately ambiguous, and the nature of these coalitions is never elaborated upon. Sayeed states that the Northwest Frontier Provinces were simply "under a Congress Ministry."[54] The real point of contention, as both writers know, was the United Provinces. Yet Nehru never mentions this region by name.

The crux of Nehru's argument is introduced casually, as "a matter of fact." It hinges on what he sees as the nature of the Indian National Congress:

> the Congress itself was a kind of coalition or joint front of various groups tied together by the dominating urge for India's independence. In spite of this variety within its fold, it had developed a discipline, a social outlook, and a capacity to offer battle in its own peaceful way.
>
> (DI 368)

The Congress is best equipped to represent India on a number of levels. The variety it yokes together stands metonymically for the unity in diversity that characterizes India itself. Like Nehru's imagined nation, however, its unity has definite limits, which permit the existence of purpose and meaning, namely, the desire for decolonization.

In contrast, "[a] wider coalition meant a joining up with people whose entire political and social outlook was different, and who were chiefly interested in office and ministerships" (DI 368). The Indian National Congress is thus implicitly elevated above the merely political sphere in which the Muslim League (never mentioned by name, but clearly implied) is situated. The Congress' difficult legal and political position—being both within and opposed to both systems—sets it apart for Nehru, lending it a moral imperative that all other parties lacked.

Furthermore, while the Congress had developed a more or less progressive policy in a variety of areas, the Muslim League had no clear agenda beyond Partition itself. This fact made it easy for a socialist such as Nehru to perceive it as fundamentally reactionary and overlook the real issues that had brought the League to political prominence. Jinnah consistently evaded concrete policies and definite goals. Even today, scholars dispute the nature of his political intentions and speculate about his vision for Indian Muslims. While he advocated the Muslim League as the sole representative of the subcontinent's Muslims (a position that, by definition, Nehru and the Congress could never accept), election results in the United Provinces proved that there was little basis in fact for this claim. Nevertheless, Nehru acknowledges that whatever the moral status of the Congress governments, the refusal to include the Muslim League had unfortunate repercussions (DI 369).

Though claims of misconduct have been accepted by some current historians and disputed by others, there is a dearth of evidence supporting either position. It has been argued that some government members used their positions "to work off their private grudges," but this does not suggest the existence of widespread abuse.[55] Sayeed points out that many Muslims objected to the singing of *Vande Mataram,* which had become more common under Congress rule (and is now the national song of independent India).[56] While the two stanzas most commonly sung were not in themselves offensive, the song derives from a literary work (Bankim Chandra Chatterji's *Anandamath*), which, on the whole, was offensive to many Muslims. Another issue was language—the Congress proposed to make Hindustani the lingua franca and endorsed both the Persian and Devanagari scripts. Jinnah was uncomfortable with this arrangement, however, for he and others feared that the prominence of Urdu could only lessen under this arrangement.

In "The Question of Minorities. The Muslim League: Mr. M.A. Jinnah" Nehru defines, for the first time, the "communal problem" as "one of adjusting the claims of the minorities and giving them sufficient protection from majority action" (DI 381–382). The terms "adjust" and "minority"

evoke the paradoxical nature of Muslim fears on the subcontinent. Majority and minority are key notions in any concept of democracy, and the fact of the Muslims' numerical disadvantage cannot be disputed. Yet, the term "minority," by definition, implies inferiority and subordination, a condition that Indian Muslims could never accept. The language of democracy is thus strained by the reality of ethnic and religious diversity in 1940s India. Instead, Nehru appropriates these terms into a socioeconomic discourse, where the majority is equated to the subaltern, and the minority to the elite (DI 383). Statistically, this assessment is undoubtedly correct, but it reverses the power dynamic implied by these terms.

Nehru's use of the word "adjust" evokes his legal background and is perhaps best understood in the context of its use in insurance, where it refers to the process of assessing claims for compensation and indemnity. Its implications of harmony and settlement also point to the tolerant society he envisions. At the same time, this process of adjustment involved attempting to counterpoint different sources of identity, using the nation-state as a center. Indeed, "Nehru did not see the communal problem and the challenge of the All India Muslim League as a thing apart; the communal issue seemed to him one aspect of the total situation with which nationalist India had to reckon."[57] One way in which Nehru attempts to diffuse the religion issue is through recourse to regional identities. The two-nation theory subsumes regional and linguistic identities and fails to give the nation a territorial basis (DI 392). As such, only within the secular nation, for Nehru, can individual identities—which include both religion and language—be lived without contradiction. The ways in which Nehru directly opposes regional and religious identity in *The Discovery of India,* however, can only be regarded as highly strategic—since, by implication, only within an all-India nation-state can disparate identities be harmonized and made to coexist in a peaceful and culturally useful way.

There is little consensus as to how the political events leading up to 1947 culminated in the Partition of the subcontinent. The support for Partition was strongest in Muslim minority areas; understandable, but ironic, given that the creation of a Muslim state seemed likely to exacerbate, rather than solve, their problems. Not only would they continue to be minorities locally, but, after Partition, Muslims in modern India (the majority of Muslims in the subcontinent in 1947) would find themselves to be an even smaller minority nationally. It has even been questioned whether Jinnah actually wanted a separate Muslim state; certainly he had not envisioned the Pakistan as it was eventually created.[58] Nehru's failure to predict Partition, then, and his rigorous refutation of it as a possibility, even at this late date, must be viewed sympathetically.

Similarly, the prevalence of communalism in India today is not an adequate basis for the dismissal of Nehru's views. The concept of Indianization has now been appropriated by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) under the banner of "one nation, one people, one culture."[59] For Nehru, however, strong nation-states are necessarily multicultural and must continuously look beyond their own borders (DI 338). It is, however, a dangerously small step from Nehru's valorization of unorthodox practices among rural Muslims to the Hindu communalist view of India's Muslims as merely lapsed Hindus, who can, and ought to, return to the fold. Indeed, Nehru's pointed notation of Jinnah's Hindu ancestry is in itself evocative of this view (DI 390).

Though Nehru's formulation has been criticized from a variety of standpoints, even the work of his detractors contains echoes of *The Discovery of India.* Aijaz Ahmad's insistence on a South Asian "civilizational ethos" that unifies diverse cultural expressions under the banner of "Indian literature" bears an uncanny similarity to Nehru's own work.[60] Similarly, Gyanendra Pandey, while emphasizing the local and particular as against the national, laments the loss of "unity in diversity" as a nationalist ethos.[61] The sort of multiculturalism entailed in the institutionalization of Indianness as "protected difference"[62] may have been doomed, inexorably, to lead "towards a fragmentation of solidarities."[63] Yet, more than fifty years later, writers and critics alike still mobilize his vocabulary to counter the continuing regional and communalist threats to India's status as a peaceful, democratic nation-state. Though he is understandably insistent on the need for nationalism in India and upon his own status as a nationalist, he recognizes that nationalism is a "narrowing creed" (DI 340). As such, *The Discovery of India* struggles continuously with its own limits.

CHAPTER 2

Vikram Seth's Real(ist) India

A Suitable Boy, published in 1993, is a novel of epic scale that charts the fortunes of a number of families in India from January 1950 to the summer of 1952, centering on the fictional city of Brahmpur, or city of Brahma, on the Gangetic plain. The title refers to the principal plot line, in which a husband is sought for a university student, Lata. Her story, however, is intertwined with many others, and the novel takes the reader from the chambers of the high court to a courtesan's salon, and to the villages and fields of North India. Vikram Seth's diverse influences represent his own broad cultural interests and experiences, as he has lived extensively in Britain, the United States, and China, as well as India. Currently, he moves primarily between the first and the last of these countries. *A Suitable Boy* was Seth's first published work of extended prose fiction.

In the first part of this chapter, I focus on the novel's use of language, paying particular attention to questions of genre in the postcolonial novel and to its concomitant status as a site of struggle between different visions of the postcolonial nation. In the second part, I argue that the vocabulary of music offers innovative ways in which to understand and articulate relationships between different religious and cultural groups, and, by extension, the cultural diversity of the nation. Nonverbal art forms therefore have the potential to transcend some of the difficulties that arise in representing the nation linguistically, but formulating literary representations of these art forms presents a different set of problems.

Translating Hybridity in Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy*

Though Indian texts have long been polyglot, it is only more recently, particularly since the publication of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* in 1981, that nonidiomatic English has been widely celebrated in Indian fictional and critical texts.[1] A hybrid form of English has been in use in

Indian literature at least since Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938). Even in this early example, difficulties of audience and accessibility associated with the language are apparent. Ironically, though Rumina Sethi praises the absorptive qualities of English, which made this novel possible, she also notes that Rao's novel has not proved amenable to translation into Kannada, the language from which it draws its inspiration.[2] Nehru's own texts also employed Hindustani words, a technique that was relatively unusual among elite Indians writing at the time (especially those producing nonfiction), even those with nationalist credentials.[3] The nature and import of what both writers of fiction (such as Raja Rao) and non-fiction (such as Nehru) were doing, both politically and aesthetically, was neither critically recognized nor widely imitated until much more recently.

This change in language usage within the Indian context has been identified with the Indianization of English—the appropriation and adaptation of the language by and for a large number of its speakers in the subcontinent.[4] As such, though Nehru rarely finds explicit mention in discussions of contemporary literary technique, his vocabulary is routinely employed by both critics and linguists. Invoking Indianization suggests a tacit acceptance of Nehru's vision of Indian history as well as a belief that the processes he depicts are ongoing. Implicitly, contemporary writers of English-language fiction in India are thus positioned as the heirs to Nehru's national project. By extension, the problems and possibilities of Indianization as a concept within literary studies offer a locus for considering the Nehruvian inheritance in the contemporary context.

The process of combining words from different languages in a single text is intrinsically a process of hybridization, which promises the opportunity to represent and discuss emergent identities and perspectives, particularly in postcolonial contexts. Linguistic hybridization might be regarded as part of the process whereby the "national vocabulary" of Nehru's imagining could be developed. This process, when applied particularly to Indian literature, has been dubbed khichrification, a reference to *khichri,* an Indian stew in which many different ingredients may be cooked together in varying proportions. Given the overtly national terms in which hybridization/khichrification is posited, it should be no surprise that it has become implicitly associated with a new idea of authenticity in postcolonial literature generally, and Indian literature in English in particular. Language that has been appropriated for and by the nation must, logically, be better equipped to represent that nation than an English that either purports to be universal or overtly locates its center elsewhere.

The discourse of linguistic Indianization implies the existence of a distinctive Indian English, a claim that, in the field of linguistics, has actually

been highly contested. Madhav M. Deshpande argues that there is indeed "an Indian linguistic norm shared by the majority of the languages in the region," but N. Krishnaswamy and Archana S. Burde argue that fluency, rather than culture, is the primary determinant of language usage.[5] Kamal K. Sridhar offers an intermediate view, identifying some distinct cultural usages among some Indians in certain circumstances.[6] It might be argued that unity in diversity lends itself particularly well to the endorsement of a hybrid or polyglot text, since such a text literally unifies diverse languages and, thus, implicitly, diverse cultures and perspectives. I will show, however, that the need for translation within the polyglot nation significantly problematizes this apparently easy relationship between hybrid language and the multicultural nation. Maria Tymoczko has suggested translation as an analogue for postcolonial fiction, a notion that recognizes the significant "foreign" audience for such works and the texts' inherently cross-cultural perspective.[7] Rushdie's oft-quoted description of himself as "translated" has become popular shorthand for articulating both the problems and the potentials of the hybrid postcolonial writer.[8]

Discussions of translation and postcoloniality have generally focused on the transcreation of nonanglophone worlds in the English language.[9] In colonial contexts, translations functioned "as a means both of containing the artistic achievements of writers in other languages and of asserting the supremacy of the dominant, European culture."[10] Postcolonial critics have challenged this tradition of translation by emphasizing indigenous concepts of translation and practices of translation between vernaculars.[11] Much less attention has been paid to the possibility of viewing translation from English into vernaculars as a postcolonial project. In 1998, however, Harish Trivedi reviewed the Hindi language translations of *Midnight's Children* and *A Suitable Boy* in the Indian periodical *The Book Review.* His assessment of these works challenges much accepted thinking on translation and linguistic hybridity within the field of postcolonial studies. I wish to briefly consider Trivedi's comments on *A Suitable Boy* and *Midnight's Children* in turn, and the troubling issues they raise in terms of authenticity, audience, and Western critical discourse. Next, I will extend my consideration of translation and linguistic hybridity through a brief reading of *A Suitable Boy* in its English version. Finally, I suggest that the novel itself deals with these problems by highlighting the limitations of language itself and pointing to other forms of discourse.

Both the prevalence of idiomatic English in *A Suitable Boy* and the fact that the novel embraces realism suggest a disjunction between Seth's work and the concerns of postcolonialism and postmodernity, which, as I will discuss in chapter 3, have been closely linked to the abandonment of realism

in favor of magical realism. This valorization of magical realism, however, subsumes the important role that realism has played historically as a medium of social criticism, particularly within the Marxist tradition.[12] Nor can Marxism be viewed solely in terms of its Western origin or Marx's clear Eurocentric biases (a prejudice discussed in detail by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak).[13] Marxist thought not only influenced Nehru in important ways—and, by extension, impacted the nation as a whole—but forms the lynchpin for such diverse postcolonial thinkers as Fredric Jameson, Aijaz Ahmad, and Spivak herself.[14] Nehru regarded social realism as the most appropriate medium for developing accessible national literature, a view endorsed by his immediate literary followers and, clearly, by Seth as well.[15] Indian writers of the 1940s and 1950s developed a practice of "[c]ritical realism," designed to address the challenges of writing the newly independent, postcolonial nation.[16] As such, they positioned themselves against the "conventions of romance" that "control the literatures of Anglo-Indian colonization."[17] Banishing realism, then, also involves the dismissal of a part of India's own indigenous literary tradition.[18]

In the context of the lukewarm reception to the novel by critics in the 1990s, Trivedi makes for *A Suitable Boy* what seems an extremely bold, even extraordinary, claim:[19]

> Of all the spectacularly successful Indian novels in English of recent years, it is *A Suitable Boy* which is the most deeply embedded in the theme and the context which it depicts, and the most intimately complicit in a local language. Seth's English has a doubleness, a twice born sanskar and resonance of cultural heritage, which should be the envy of some other Indian novelists in English . . . We have in Seth's magnum opus an awareness and even a celebration of the cultural Indianness of the Indian novel in English, which remains unparalleled.[20]

Trivedi's use of the word *sanskar* is indicative of his own eagerness both to confer insider cultural status on Seth and to convey his own intention to speak to an Indian audience. It is a word also rendered in English as *samskar* or *samskara* and derived from the same root as the term "Sanskrit." As such, it connotes high culture and refinement as well as refers to the consecrating rituals of orthodox Hindu life. It is a term that would be readily comprehensible to Indian readers.

Trivedi's positive assessment of the novel is closely linked to his evaluation of its Hindi version. Gopal Gandhi's translation is highly praised, but some of its success is attributed to the intrinsic qualities of the source text. This translation of *A Suitable Boy,* Trivedi argues, captures the latent multilingualism of

the novel itself, which, according to the reviewer, proves eminently well suited to re-creation in Hindi for an Indian audience. The project of translation is therefore a wholly felicitous one. *Midnight's Children,* on the other hand, is presented as all but inaccessible to that same "native" audience, because of those very linguistic qualities that have so often been praised. Trivedi himself admits to being taken with Rushdie's "magic bilingualism" and "biculturalism."[21] The translation by Priyadarshan was officially commissioned in honor of the fiftieth anniversary of Indian independence, a political move that indicates Rushdie's canonicity and the degree to which his narrative of South Asian history has been embraced, even in India, where he is generally regarded more ambivalently than in the West.

According to Trivedi, it is a rather poor translation and nearly unreadable. In the process of laying bare the faults of the Hindi version, Trivedi not only exposes Priyadarshan's shortcomings as a translator, but also suggests that the fault for some of the translator's failings actually rests with Rushdie himself. Trivedi claims that the details and explanations Rushdie must provide to make the novel comprehensible to the average Western reader grate on and bore the Indian reader. The real problem for the translator, however, comes from Rushdie's language. The Hindi/Urdu words and phrases, which give the work its distinctive texture in English, do not have this effect in translation, where they simply appear quotidian. In addition, the book contains errors in cultural reference that a Hindi-speaking audience would readily identify.[22] Both these facts present serious problems to the Hindi- or Urdu-speaking translator.

As a result, Trivedi sees a fundamental problem in the novel's perspective. Its language, and the wrong kind of attention to detail, marks *Midnight's Children* as intended for a non-Indian audience. Can a text that has been taken as a master narrative of modern India, destined for an English-speaking audience, play the same role inside India as outside? Trivedi clearly implies that the answer is no, though this is never explicitly stated. Trivedi therefore suggests that though Rushdie has found both an audience and critical acclaim in many of the world's languages, both must elude his work when translated into Hindi or Urdu because he has chosen to write from a standpoint that excludes him irredeemably from the cultures he depicts.

The translatability of these two texts clearly has implications for Trivedi in terms of their literary merit. His assessment of Rushdie is undoubtedly harsh—it seems likely that Trivedi is responding in part to Rushdie's willingness to endorse a translation so riddled with errors. By Rushdie's own admission, he never contemplated the translation of his work into Hindi or Urdu, and his indifference to literature in these languages is well known.[23] In contrast, Seth enthusiastically embraced the translation of his

work and claimed, in a preface, that the translation strengthened his work by returning it to its original context, for what he sees as its most important audience.[24]

Nor is Trivedi's concern with audience exceptional—his criticism echoes claims made by other Indian critics such as Makarand Paranjape who maintains that "interpreting India to the West is not as important as interpreting India to Indians" and thereby also suggests that the two are distinct, perhaps even mutually exclusive, activities.[25] If, indeed, khichrified texts such as Rushdie's are fundamentally untranslatable, the representational status of Indianized English must be radically qualified. Surely, any notion of authenticity that threatens to alienate the very culture it depicts demands close critical scrutiny. The issue is further complicated by the fact that translation has been embraced from a distinctly nationalist standpoint within the Indian context. Some Indian critics, such as Indra Nath Choudhuri, have gone so far as to define India as a "translation area," positing the nation as a distinct community of translators and translations.[26] This suggests that translation is not only possible within a nationalist context, but is in fact the ultimate act of nationalist consolidation. In this context, questions of translatability are inexorably tied to those of national identity and authenticity.

A Suitable Boy uses a number of Hindi, Urdu, and Bengali words, but the dominant mode is standard English, and this has been identified as a source of its literary weakness.[27] Yet the novel explicitly recognizes the linguistic competencies of its characters, both within the plot and through the act of narration. The text also specifies the language in which many of the characters' utterances occur. The religious and political dimensions of language usage in North India are also made explicit in the legislative debate on Hindi and Urdu as well as through reference to the linguistic abilities of particular characters. *A Suitable Boy* thus incorporates the compartmentalization of language use that Indian linguists such as Krishnaswamy have identified as a key feature of life in South Asia.[28] It is generally agreed that though English may be the language of money and power in India, it is not the dominant language of religion or personal life. As such, language usage makes explicit the nationalist division of the spheres identified by Partha Chatterjee.[29] In the novel, this division between public and private is rendered concrete in the case of Mahesh Kapoor, a nationalist activist turned politician, and his wife; but, at the same time, it is subtly subverted. Mrs. Kapoor is a rather traditional wife, and her unilingualism—that is, her ignorance of English—confirms both to herself and to other, elite characters in the novel (Meenakshi, in particular) that she is ignorant and unsophisticated.[30] Yet Mahesh Kapoor needs his wife to read him the Hindi records

of the legislative assembly, which, though fluent in English and Urdu, he is unable to read for himself.

Indeed, in the novel as a whole, there is no easy division between the home and the world. Nor is it simply a question of different languages being appropriate to different contexts. Hindi and English are shown to carry fundamentally different worldviews, as is evident from Pran's reflections on the river Ganges: "When he thought in English, it was the Ganges, rather than the Ganga, to him" (ASB 59). A teacher of English literature at the local university, his perspective and subject position are inexorably linked to the language he chooses. In calling the river in question "Ganga," he implicitly identifies himself as both a Hindu and an Indian, by placing himself within the mythologized landscape of "Mother India." In contrast, the name "Ganges" suggests the perspective of an outsider. It aligns Pran with the Western reader who lacks access to the inner domain of Indian cultural identity. "Ganges" essentially represents a rewriting of the Indian landscape by the British and their language, an appropriation that Pran implicitly accepts when he uses English. When he uses "Ganges," Pran also distances himself from the discourse of religion, practicing instead the secular discourse of Western cartography.

The problem of translation is thus present within the lives of the characters themselves. Pran's experience of language has a doubleness that is evocative of the splitting of the self experienced by colonized individuals.[31] The characters translate themselves for themselves, in addition to practicing translation as a communication ethos. As such, the novel's approach to language readily comprehends that of the middle-class, Hindi-speaking Indian. At the same time, the overt attention that the novel's characters call to their problems of language usage gives *A Suitable Boy* a self-reflexive quality, highlighting the inevitable absence of neutrality and transparency in Seth's own words. Seth restages, in fictional terms, the self-conscious construction of national language that is at the center of *The Discovery of India.* Repeatedly, the novel's characters are placed in situations where their linguistic competence is challenged, or at least questioned. The way in which they acquit themselves in these varied situations is emblematic of the role they have to play in Seth's vision of India.

Hindi-speaking Haresh, for instance, is perhaps the most successful communicator. Like Nehru, Haresh rejects caste and communalism in favor of humanism and science, envisioning his identity in national terms. Haresh's language skills are paid special attention in the novel; his fluency in English, for example, is one of the criteria by which his suitability as a husband for Lata must be judged, both by Lata and by her family (ASB 1413). Indeed, the most serious threat to their relationship results from a misunderstanding

concerning the usage of the word "mean." Haresh understands the word in its dictionary sense and feels he has been accused of being "ungenerous, lowly, base"; Lata, however, has used it in a more colloquial, and more American, way, intending it to be a much milder critique (ASB 1252). Thus, though Lata is clearly more concerned with cultivating an appearance of Anglicization (and Haresh's appearance, like his English usage, is also a cause for concern), Haresh's knowledge of English is no less nuanced than hers.

As such, Haresh epitomizes the Nehruvian notion of modernization-without-westernization. Socially, he occupies a unique position within the novel. Haresh possesses a degree in English literature from India's most prestigious university and has first-hand knowledge of English culture, but has also been a laborer and factory worker. Unlike the novel's other Anglicized characters, however, he does not seem particularly concerned by the quality of English he speaks and has a marked preference for low British culture, preferring films and pubs to plays and hotels. When Haresh leaves the Hindi belt to take up work in a shoe factory in Calcutta, he initially has difficulty communicating with his Bengali supervisees. Haresh manages to overcome this difficulty largely due to the fact that he is able, in the modern industrial context of the factory, to place himself, at least briefly, in the same subject position as those under him, thereby constructing himself as a friend and colleague. He shows the respect due to age and experience without regard to class or rank (ASB 1213). He also takes the concerns of the workers seriously and looks out for their interests (ASB 1214–1215). Finally, he shows that he is willing to get his hands dirty (ASB 1218). Those same actions, which win him the trust of the employees, initially arouse the suspicion of the managers, but they too are eventually won over (ASB 1220). Both the company and its employees directly benefit from his success. Consequently, Haresh's work at the factory emerges as a triumph of both industrial capitalism and social reform.

In contrast, Meenakshi, an Anglicized and flamboyant socialite, falters as soon as she leaves her familiar milieu. Although she is rarely at a loss for words in her own elite circle, she cannot communicate even with the middle-class "Mr. and Mrs. Maitra, her hosts" whom she finds "too deadly for words." Meenakshi's inability to speak illustrates the communication gap between them, despite the fact that the Maitras are also fluent English speakers. Nor can Mr. and Mrs. Maitra adequately express themselves to her—the misunderstanding concerning arrangements for lunch is emblematic of this. It should be no surprise, then, that she is even further removed from the rural agriculturists who form her in-laws' extended family: "As for the Rudhia riffraff—words failed her" (ASB 992). Their mutual incomprehensibility is

made literal in that the peasants cannot speak English, the language with which Meenakshi is most comfortable.

Meenakshi's communicative failings are partly the result of her own lack of cultural understanding and her disdain for those whom she regards as social inferiors. Not all of the novel's elite characters find themselves so tongue-tied in the presence of other, lower-class Indians. Maan, for instance, experiences limited success in assimilating himself into the pattern of village life, when he goes with his Urdu teacher to the latter's ancestral farm. Though the village children gawk at him when they see him practicing the Urdu script, he proves reasonably adept at communicating with them orally (ASB 555). Initially, Maan rightly regards his exile from the city as a punishment (as his father intended it to be), but in time he forges a lasting bond with the countryside and its inhabitants, although he never totally ceases to be an outsider. This linkage is cemented and shown to be a valuable asset when Maan returns to campaign for his father's reelection (ASB 1095). Successful communicators—especially in cross-cultural and complex contexts—also prove to be good and effective nationalists.

Even the efforts of the best-intentioned characters are not always successful, however. When Haresh and his business partner Kendarnath attempt to visit the community of Dalits who make their living tanning leather, they are met with hostility and silence. The issue is not one of vocabulary per se, for the tanners reply coherently to the intruders' questions—the issue is rather one of community and context, which proves equally prohibitive in both English and Hindi (ASB 217). The tanners mistrust the intruders and self-consciously refuse to make themselves accessible to them. Kendarnath and Haresh have just as much difficulty as the unnamed tanner does and long to escape at least as much as the tanners wish to see them go. In this section, Seth highlights the real barriers to communication thrown up by differences of culture and class, which confound the limits of translation as a national practice.[32] In this way, *A Suitable Boy* simultaneously echoes and critiques Nehru's model of India, since it both reiterates the goal of integrating the subaltern into the national discursive community and points to its failure to date; more than forty years after independence, most Indian citizens remain outside the conversation of democracy.[33]

This mutual difficulty in communication between subalterns and representatives of the elite classes has been recorded by Prakash Shirsat, an urban, educated Dalit writer who tried to interview village Dalits who had been involved in a local boycott: "Everyone I talked to sounded like he had been forcibly, suddenly woken up from deep sleep. Words came forth haltingly, incoherently, as if no one understood, at all, what he was saying."[34]

Subalterns can certainly speak to one another, and do in this novel—as the peons overheard by Agarwal, another politician, illustrate—but they cannot speak in English or in such a way as to communicate with the cultural elites.[35] That Agarwal, who is opposed to legal measures designed to better the condition of Indian lower classes, can only overhear the peons while concealed in a toilet cubicle, and not communicate directly with them, is indicative of his larger unsuitability to represent the nation. At the same time, the communicative hierarchy that is represented in the novel is continuously challenged within the narrative itself by the presence of lower-class, Hindi-speaking characters. Though these unnamed attendants are forced to demean themselves through obsequious behavior, the very real dependence of high-status characters, such as Professor Mishra, on their services is signaled linguistically. The peon is able to force a language switch—if Mishra wants to be served, he must employ the language of his attendant rather than the other way around (ASB 58).

It is not any assumption of the absolute adequacy or transparency of language, then, that lends *A Suitable Boy* its particular translatability. Nor do I think it inevitable that, given the nature of Rushdie's national allegory, his work is incompatible with India's supposedly national language. Indeed, as I will discuss in chapter 3, Rushdie owes his own debt to Nehru's nationalist vocabulary. It is widely acknowledged that a different approach is required when translating for the source culture rather than the target culture, but less attention has been paid to the problems inherent in the former. Future considerations of postcolonial translation may have to give greater attention to the source culture. Target and source are, traditionally, constructed as two discrete entities, and a given text is intended for one, not both. Given the hybrid nature of many postcolonial texts, however, this division significantly problematizes the relationship between translation and postcoloniality. Suggesting too close an analogy between translation and postcolonial literature implies that such literature faces irredeemably in one direction only. Too strong an emphasis on hybridity, however, produces the same effect. While it may be true that "the locus of translation is obviously multicultural," it may be, ironically, a multiculturalism of a dangerously exclusivist kind.[36]

Not only does positing Rushdie's bazaar language as normative threaten to reinscribe the colonizing gaze that all postcolonial writers and critics ostensibly reject, but it threatens to blind us, as critics, to alternative and possibly more subtle ways of addressing India's linguistic and cultural multiplicity. Seth's detractors have been overwhelmingly Anglo-American critics, a fact that, at the very least, highlights the need to carefully scrutinize all literary judgments, particularly in postcolonial contexts. Works of translation

in non-European languages may provide a useful corrective to potential critical and cultural bias. Indeed, such works point to the existence of a sort of translation qualitatively different from that engaged in by most postcolonial writers working in English—namely, the process whereby people and ideas are translated into the nation as such, rather than from one nation to another.

Sounds of Harmony and Conflict

Despite the novel's overt emphasis on issues of language, the national coherence that *A Suitable Boy* envisions can only be dramatized and never spoken. The coming together of India's cosmopolitan elite in urban Calcutta creates a "sea of language" on which the main character, Lata, drifts, moving from one conversation to another (ASB 432). The experience is aural, but not reduced to any vocabulary. Cultural harmony is thus not something that is spoken in *A Suitable Boy,* but rather something that must be performed. Unlike the individual performances of Gandhi or Nehru, however, *A Suitable Boy* imagines, quite appropriately, the performance of the nation as a collective endeavor, in which individual identities are more likely to be blurred than emphasized, as the individual voices and silences blend into the mellifluous sounds in Lata's ear. At the same time, the subjectivity of the individual listener/citizen is maintained—though all contribute to, and can hear, the "sea of language," everyone will hear something slightly different, according to his or her own position.

The moment of unity depicted in the celebration of Ram Lila, in which members of all classes, castes, and religions participate, is presented as a giant canvas, one that the novel's characters are at a loss to describe because all speech is drowned out by the music. While this scenario emphasizes spectatorship, it preserves the possibility of the nation being broadly performative, especially since the nature of the Ram Lila celebration has traditionally worked to blur the conventional boundary between performance and spectatorship.[37] When Mahesh Kapoor attempts to establish the religious identity of the participating musicians, he learns only that they are from the market.

In order to understand the status of music as a mode of nationalist performance in *A Suitable Boy,* a few words must first be said about the history of Indian music. In particular, the ghazal, which, as the music that brings together Maan and Saeeda Bai, figures importantly in the novel's plot, merits special attention; its history encapsulates the shared high culture of North India, so formative for Nehru. The ghazal has its origins in medieval Arabic literature and became an important part of Persian, and then, in the

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Urdu literature.[38] It is the Urdu ghazal that figures in *A Suitable Boy,* and it is this tradition that I would like to address. Ghazal is actually a poetic form rather than a musical one, and may be subdivided into six categories.[39] Each type is distinguished by its subject matter and by its performative aspects. All ghazals are written in couplets, have a common rhyme scheme, and are most often between six and twenty-six lines in length.[40] Each couplet is capable of standing on its own, and the "ghazal acts largely as a kind of frame and showcase for its individual verses."[41] A lexicon of stock images and symbols, familiar to the audience, is key to the ghazal's ability to be simultaneously rich and terse.[42]

The rose and the nightingale are two images that occur repeatedly in Urdu poetry. The "nightingale is the symbol of the lover, who pours out his love for the rose in beautiful song. The rose is the beloved—beautiful, but totally unmoved by the nightingale's love."[43] The following couplet by the renowned poet Ghalib illustrates the conventional usage of these images:

> All that the nightingale can do provokes the rose's laughter
> What men call love is really a derangement of the mind.[44]

The wineglass is another commonly occurring image. It is associated with a blooming flower and consequently with openness and laughter. While a certain amount of innovation in the use of these symbols was considered praiseworthy, any usage that departed too radically from the image's conventional associations evoked criticism from the literary community.[45] The same set of imagery could be used to refer to both earthly and spiritual love. The flexibility of conventional ghazal symbolism is key to the subtlety and openness of the form.

The art-song ghazal, the version present in the novel, is "an elite musical entertainment . . . associated with feudal courts and courtesan salons."[46] Art-song ghazals are usually classified as "light-classical"[47] or "semi-classical,"[48] and are usually accompanied by "light ragas of amorous sentiment."[49] Ragas are rigidly classified on the basis of the number of notes used and their arrangement, by ancient Sanskrit texts.[50] The raga has both "an ideational and a technical side" and is "an abstract image often represented in painting . . . and poetry."[51] "Raga" literally means "affection, happy feeling, color, mode, mood . . . In music it means a set of tones arranged in ascending and descending order."[52] Despite this apparent rigidity, "the same *raga* assumes slightly different patterns every time it is created."[53]

Though Vedic (and therefore Hindu) in origin, the raga, too, partakes in the subcontinent's history of cultural exchange—at least two ragas are

known to have Arabic origins.[54] Many of the best-known ragas were composed by Miyan Tansen, a sixteenth-century musician who epitomizes the hybridity of India's musical heritage. Born to Brahmins as a result of the blessing of a Sufi fakir, Tansen was "a peculiar synthesis—a Brahmin Muslim."[55] He studied under a Hindu swami and found patronage at a number of courts—both Hindu and Muslim—before coming to the attention of the emperor Akbar, who gave him the highest possible position in the imperial court. Though a practicing Muslim all his life, Tansen "often visited Hindu temples to pray and to chant the Vedic verses," and many of his compositions "were written in praise of Hindu deities."[56] The history of music in North India is thus one of "inherent syncretism."[57]

Unlike the raga, which has remained a learned, classical form, the ghazal is more widely appreciated within Indian society today, as its incorporation into contemporary film suggests. The ghazal could also be highly unorthodox in content. Mir, for instance, the form's preeminent eighteenth-century practitioner, was "too individualistic to fall in line with orthodoxy which a definitive creed demands."[58] The following couplets by Mir illustrate this less conventional religious and artistic approach:

> True Musulman am I, for to these idols
> I pledge my love. 'There is no god but God.'
> The very men who thought it blasphemy to worship idols
> Sit now before the mosque and put the caste mark on their brow.
> The bond of love is all—Islam and unbelief are nothing:
> Take rosary *and* sacred cord and wear them on your neck.[59]

On the one hand, in the second couplet, Mir appears to criticize the hypocrisy of orthodox Muslims who condemn Hindu religious practice. At the same time, an idol "is a symbol of beauty, and beauty is the manifestation of God," and so it is possible to read the first couplet as a commitment to orthodox Islam.[60] In turn, the poet may be implicitly likening the Kaba to an idol, a comparison that lends a charged ambivalence to the couplet. The third couplet, on the other hand, in joining the symbols of Hinduism and Islam (the sacred cord and the rosary, respectively) appears to reject all ideas of orthodoxy. Mir's words are later echoed by Ghalib:

> Put on the sacred thread, and break the hundred-beaded rosary.
> The traveller takes the path he sees to be the even one.[61]

Both poets used Hindu vocabulary and symbols (referring to temples, gurus, etc.) in their poetry. The ghazal came to be considered "as much Indian as

the indigenous forms."[62] Ahmed Ali even argues that the first Urdu poems were written in Devanagari, rather than in Persian, script.[63]

The ghazal, too, is thus a hybrid genre, a "unique synthesis," as the combination of indigenous and imported instruments that traditionally accompany its performance reveals.[64] Its ability to embrace diverse allusions and multiple cultural functions resonates, at the textual level, with the unity in diversity that, for Nehru, was encapsulated in the high Sanskritic tradition. The story of its incorporation into the mainstream of Indian culture (as epitomized by its presence in popular films) from its more lofty, and foreign, origins in medieval Arabic poetry also offers a model narrative of indigenization. In privileging the ghazal, rather than the epics (favored by Nehru, as I will discuss in chapter 7), as foundational Indian texts, Seth suggests an alternative and more inclusive reading of India's cultural history, one that better reflects the subcontinent's history of shared culture.

Indeed, the history of the ghazal is, in and of itself, inexorably linked to India's unity in diversity:

> Its vogue was linked to an atmosphere of relative communal amity in which educated Hindus as well as Muslims cultivated interest and proficiency in gazal [*sic*], adopting Muslim pen-names, wearing Muslim *sherwani,* and often worshiping together at Muslim shrines.[65]

Muslim attire was, of course, embraced by Nehru himself. Given the implication of ghazal performances in the courtly cultural context that was his literal and imagined inheritance, and the inseparability of the form in the nineteenth century from the radical message of tolerance and hybridity that many of the best poems conveyed, it would seem to present an ideal medium for the articulation and performance of the nation as culturally diverse.

A strong allegiance between the nationalist movement and the practice of Indian music was first forged at the turn of the twentieth century. The career of Vishnu Paluskar represented a radical revisioning of the place of music within Indian society: he decided to shun patronage, instead bringing classical music to the middle class. As part of his program, he joined the Indian National Congress and toured the country singing at its conventions.[66] Paluskar's music was regularly sung at Congress meetings and marches, and he counted Gandhi among his many supporters. He also founded a modern music school in 1901. Such schools have since proliferated and now many are sponsored by the state.[67] Paluskar's cultural agenda and his nationalist one were thus inextricably linked. Similar links were forged in the visual arts, a phenomenon I will discuss in chapter 7.

The Indian National Congress also had its musical counterpart in the All-India Music Conference, first convened in 1916. Its goals included taking "steps to protect and uplift . . . Indian music on national lines," effecting "a happy fusion of the northern and southern systems of music as would enrich both" and providing a uniform system of notation and establishing a national music academy.[68] The twin desires for an amalgamation of regional styles and for a single system of notation are clearly nationalistic. Notation could "capture" Indian music and, in so doing, allow it to "attain validity as an art-form." This was important to the "middle-class . . . which hoped to show the British that Hindu music was indeed respectable, scientific, and worthy of their approval, and, by extension, that Indians were the social and intellectual equals of the British."[69] This claim of equality was important to nationalist ideology; the need to validate Indian music in this way indicates a defensive attitude toward the inner domain of Indian life.

With the decline of the Mughal gentry in the nineteenth century, a new "proto-capitalist class of absentee landlords and urban speculators," who lacked both knowledge and appreciation of "the hoary, austere classical genres," became India's principal patrons of the arts.[70] In the twentieth century, middle-class Indians played an increasingly important role in financing artistic endeavors; indeed, musical performances for paying public audiences are a strictly twentieth-century phenomenon in India.[71] The new cultural weight acquired by the middle class is particularly important given that it was its cultural identity that was most threatened by the social and economic changes of the first half of the twentieth century.[72] Importantly, the middle class embraced a distinctively modern morality, influenced both by Victorian mores and the reforming zeal of early nationalists such as Ram Mohan Roy, which objected to courtesans and, by extension, the artistic and social forms with which they had traditionally been associated.[73] Consequently, "[s]ince the 1940s, the traditions of the [hereditary] professional female musicians have all but disappeared." Though women continue as musicians in contemporary India, they tend to be middle-class individuals who have no familial connection to the profession.[74]

A Suitable Boy engages with these socioeconomic changes in a number of ways. Among the novel's musicians, Saeeda Bai is the most central to the plot of the novel, but, as both artist and courtesan, is something of a cultural anachronism. Her own family life, however, acts as a microcosm for the death of the courtesan tradition. Though Saeeda Bai appears to come from a line of hereditary singers (her mother was also a singer), her daughter will not follow in her footsteps. Saeeda Bai takes pains to distance Tasneem from her mother's professional activities, lest the taint of the courtesan's

supposed immorality in any way mar the younger woman's prospects for a more conventional, middle-class life. Saeeda Bai's rigorous attention to her daughter's religious education serves to underline both the latter's suitability for respectable life and, by extension, the former's acceptance, at least in principle, of middle-class norms.

Saeeda Bai's prominence in *A Suitable Boy,* however, suggests that Seth's depiction of music is actually a subtle critique of the subordination of older traditions of cultural production—and their attendant morality—to emergent, and overtly capitalist, forms. The narrative device that sees Maan become unhealthily obsessed with her and, as a result, commit a crime, parodies middle-class disapproval of courtesans and their art rather than reinforces it. Maan's inability to hold a job, his propensity for gambling, and his possible homosexual leanings all suggest that he is not the "suitable boy" of the novel's title. Saeeda Bai, on the other hand, attempts to persuade him to give up his vices and behave more conventionally. It is he who ruins her, and not the other way around.

The role of the middle class as consumers of music produced for a capitalist society is also evident in the teacher Majeed Khan's other occupation—that of radio artist. Not only is the radio an extremely public medium, widely accessible to individuals of different regions and backgrounds, it is one with an overtly nationalist purpose, which is highlighted in its name, All India Radio. As a government-controlled media, it is explicitly nationalist and seeks to create a unified cultural space throughout the subcontinent. Indeed, it is India's "single largest promoter and patron of art music."[75] All India Radio currently boasts that its "coverage is 90% area, serving 98.81% of the people in the largest democracy of the world."[76] Pakistan, though proximate to India in both cultural and geographic terms, is beyond the reach of All India Radio. All India Radio represents a direct intrusion of the political into the cultural landscape, in the name of the nation. The utilization of a widely available technology in an attempt to engineer a specifically Indian identity points to an implicit acceptance of the ideology of modernization-without-westernization.

Yet, within the novel, the radio does not function as an unequivocally democratic medium. Artists of different "grades" do not interact as equals; they do not sit together, and lower-status musicians treat their superiors with deference (ASB 320). Ustad Majeed Khan's attempts to distance himself from his own musical origins also bespeak the lack of equality among musicians (ASB 322). He makes clear his contempt both for the ghazal and for the songs of Tagore, which he feels only a "buffoon" could prefer to classical music (ASB 315). His dislike of Kathak dancers also reflects the middle-class view of Kathak as a disreputable "bohemian" form (ASB 313).[77]

For him, Saeeda Bai is a "desecrator of the holy shrine of music" (ASB 317), though she has a more refined taste than he (ASB 395).

The film industry has had a similar effect to radio, producing a "relatively homogeneous, common-denominator musical style."[78] The unifying effect ascribed to the Hindi film *Deedar* in *A Suitable Boy* is thus only possible in a context of modern, postfeudal, cultural production. Popular music, too, is symptomatic of modernization-without-westernization. The film industry, though not state-controlled, is also an instrument of cultural nationalism. It has "sought to appeal to and create a relatively homogeneous mass audience," and in so doing has implied the existence of a national Indian audience.[79] It is not, then, inappropriate that its center, Bombay, is a cosmopolitan city where foreign and indigenous influences as well as numerous Indian cultures have converged.[80]

The wild popularity of *Deedar* extends not only to all religious communities but to all classes as well. Dr. Kishen Chand Seth shares his adoration for *Deedar* with sweepers (ASB 145, 276). Though the doctor would, in all probability, find speaking to such people difficult, the emotion he expresses upon seeing the film is identical to theirs. When Varun and the driver of the tonga in which he is riding—strangers from different classes and castes—unite in singing the popular tune, they affirm their common culture and thereby evoke the space of a nation (ASB 25). Varun is jokingly described as a bulbul (nightingale) when he sings in this scene, a comment that draws on conventional ghazal imagery, discussed earlier. The allusion requires no explanation and is a reminder of the extent to which shared meanings, and community, are created through figurative language.

Trivedi argues that Seth avoids being overly "culture-specific" in choosing not to name the source or author of the film song that Varun sings in the tonga. The song in question comes from a popular Hindi film and would be familiar to most readers who know Hindi, but not to their Anglo-American counterparts. Trivedi contends that in failing to provide details about the song, Seth rightly accedes to "the emotional distance and even the cultural alienation built into the English language."[81] Trivedi's charge is not consistent, however, with Seth's treatment of classical music. Several different ragas are named in the novel—and these are hardly less culture specific than the Hindi film.

Ustad Majeed Khan performs ragas "Shri" (ASB 157) and "Miya-ki-Todi" (ASB 320), and teaches ragas "Bhairava," "Ramkali" (ASB 314), "Malkauns" (ASB 315), and "Darbari" (ASB 1091). Saeeda Bai sings raga "Pilu" (ASB 328). No explanation or description is ever offered of these different pieces. Indeed, these songs are even more specific, given the lesser degree of accessibility assigned to this genre. Each of these ragas has specific resonances that

are of the utmost relevance to the text. "Shri" is a solemn raga expressing "the peace that is attributed to the sages when immersed in prayer," which requires a "philosophic, meditative approach" and an "austere, masculine treatment." It is thus particularly appropriate to Ustad Majeed Khan, who takes a somber attitude toward music and compares his musical performances to prayer (ASB 319). Similarly, "Todi," of which "Miya-ki-Todi" is a variation, is a serious raga bound by strict rules.[82] "Pilu," on the other hand, is a graceful raga and is thus also appropriate to its singer, the seductive Saeeda Bai.[83] It is considered to be a light or "licentious" raga, in which the rules of the raga need not be closely adhered to. It is performed in a playful fashion and is considered appropriate for adaptation to a ghazal performance.[84]

Different ragas are associated with different times of day and different seasons. Ustad complains about having to teach "Malkauns" in the morning, because the tones of this raga evoke the falling of night.[85] "Darbari" is associated with midnight, and Ustad Majeed Khan does perform it in the evening, at Baitar Fort—the Nawab Sahib finds this raga to be particularly "appropriate . . . to the surroundings," since it is reminiscent of the darbar, or courtly gathering of the Mughals (ASB 1091).[86] "Bhairava," on the other hand, is "associated with dawn and is of a reverent and quiet nature."[87] It is fitting then, that Ustad Majeed Khan mistakenly believes he has been teaching it to Malati when "a bright ray" falls on "Malati's cheerful face" (ASB 315). The irony of the Ustad's mistake lies in the fact that the raga evokes Shiva in his aspect as the destroyer and, as such, has a strong masculine aspect.[88] Indeed, Ustad Majeed Khan later finds himself humming this very raga (ASB 319). The "mood of the raga combines terror, grandeur, seriousness and awe-inspiring adoration"; these are all characteristics that the Ustad actively cultivates.[89] In fact it is Veena who has been assigned to learn this particular raga, and it mirrors the sobriety that she feels on the day she performs it (ASB 316).

I would argue, then, that Seth's technique actually serves to highlight Indian cultural identity. The reader who easily identifies the film song in question instantly supplies the missing details concerning its origins and thereby shares a moment of complicity with the author. Seth's refusal to explain to a Western audience what is "a readily recognizable nostalgia package to most Hindi readers" implicitly inscribes the insider status of the text.[90] Similarly, the inclusion of the names of specific ragas serves to distance the ordinary, untutored Western reader, for whom one raga is as good as another. These names will mean little or nothing to him or her and so serve as a reminder of cultural otherness.

Furthermore, while words and expressions can be translated (or at the very least approximated), only a lengthy and technical explanation will

succeed in enlightening the uninformed reader as to the nature of a particular raga. Such an explanation, whether in the text itself or in a footnote, would do violence to both the structure and the texture of the novel. Even if this sort of pedagogical material were to be included, the reader in question would still, in all likelihood, not have the same understanding of the raga as someone who had actually heard one. Lacking any association with either the ragas or the quote from a film song, the Western reader is necessarily reminded of the gaps in his or her own understanding. At the same time, it evokes the existence of a distinctive Indian reading community, composed of individuals who can recognize their commonality through their shared understanding of these terms.

Since the positioning of the different ragas mirrors and reinforces events within the narrative itself, they form an important part of the language of the novel. Indeed, the novel's structure mimics musical forms. Just as a raga must begin and conclude on the same note, so too does *A Suitable Boy.*[91] It both begins and ends with a marriage—of Savita and Lata, respectively—and with the challenge of finding a spouse for a resistant child (Lata in the first case and Varun in the second). Like the ghazal, the novel has its own lexicon of images. It is at the Kapoor household that Saeeda Bai first sees Imtiaz, the Nawab Sahib's son, and immediately after doing so, she sings the following couplet: "Interpretation's gate is closed and barred/But I go through and neither know nor care" (ASB 90). Toward the end of the novel, when it is revealed that the Nawab Sahib is also the father of Saeeda Bai's daughter Tasneem, Zainab (Imtiaz's sister) declares that "wisdom lay in closing the door of interpretation," effectively erasing the blood relationship that ties his family to Tasneem (ASB 1422). The same words bracket not only the story of Firoz and Tasneem but also the novel as a whole, lending it a fugue-like structure.

The centrality of interpretation as both a theme and device within *A Suitable Boy* is thus reflected in its imagery. The portrayal of interpretation as a door or gate suggests that it may function to either liberate or confine. It thus accords with the notion of language as a boundary, the traversing of which poses serious risks. Indeed, Tasneem's parentage is only one of many things in the novel that must be left unspoken in order to preserve a delicate social balance. Only music, as I will show, can fill these verbal voids.

A successful musical performance both symbolizes and defines the boundaries of a harmonious nation, while aural dissonance functions in the novel to encapsulate social disharmony. Despite the religious and cultural associations of different musical forms, musical performance can, in *A Suitable Boy,* provide an opportunity for cultural and religious differences to be overcome, at least momentarily. Ustad Majeed Khan sings of Krishna,

even as he condemns (in his mind) the construction of the Shiva temple (ASB 319). His choice of raga ("Bhairava") at this moment is particularly revealing. Each raga is associated with a range of pictorial representation, and artists produce images by "improvising on predetermined compositions much as musicians created variations on the basic melodic themes."[92] The resulting paintings are called *ragamalas.* Despite the fiercely religious (Hindu) theme of raga "Bhairava," a corresponding ragamala was painted in Mughal style by a Muslim artist or artists, the son(s) of a Muslim saint, for a Hindu who was one of Akbar's officers. "One could hardly cite a more dramatic instance of cultural and religious integration," a tradition that, unwittingly, perhaps, Ustad Majeed Khan therefore positions himself within.[93] Indeed, as a Muslim singing "Bhairava," he contributes to that tradition of syncretism, even as he ponders communal discord. Muslim musicians also participate in the Ram Lila, a festive staging of the events described in the Ramayana (ASB 1149). Saeeda Bai, a Muslim, performs at the Kapoor household in honor of Holi, a Hindu holiday (ASB 86). She sings "these happy descriptions of young Krishna playing Holi with the milkmaids . . . with such charm and energy that one would have had to be convinced that she saw the scene before her own eyes" (ASB 88).

Just as music provides a forum where religious difference can be, at least for a short time, effortlessly and even unwittingly overcome, religious clashes in *A Suitable Boy* are dramatized in images of cacophony. The offence that the construction of a Shiva temple causes to worshippers at a nearby mosque is symbolized in the dissonance Ustad Majeed Khan perceives between "the muezzin's early cry" and "that of the conch" (ASB 319). Similarly, it is the disharmony between the festive cries of the Hindu celebrators at the Ram Lila and the mournful wails of the Muslims at the Moharram procession that sparks off bloody religious rioting in the novel (ASB 1151). Drumming is part of both events—a fact that indicates that music may be a form of prayer for Muslims as well as Hindus (ASB 319). Even though the tenor of the two festivals—Moharram and Ram Lila—are entirely opposed, with one being an occasion for mourning and the other a moment of raucous celebration, there is thus no fundamental dissimilarity between Hindu and Muslim worship in this context since each literally partakes in the same activity. Like musical disharmony, social disagreement is, in this case, a result of poor timing, inattention, and intolerance, rather than any fundamental clash of values.

At the same time, musical performance often marks a point of ellipsis in the text, concealing the inability or unwillingness of a character to speak. Kedarnath cannot say that the musicians at the Ram Lila are Muslim, and his answer, when Mahesh Kapoor inquires as to their origins, is drowned

by the music. Musical performance therefore reveals a basic unity that words alone are not adequate to express. It also illustrates the inability of politicians and religious leaders to properly articulate the hybridity of the nation, which can only be performed, not spoken. At the same time, Kedarnath's location of the musicians in the market (rather than in a specific geographical, religious, or ethnic community, which Kapoor's question seems to demand) points to the capitalist economy as the source of the new nation's cultural production. Yet the tradition of Ram Lila celebration both precedes and transcends India's arrival into capitalism; the elision of the musicians' identities contained in the word "market" may also invoke the popular syncretism of the bazaar, which both incorporates and extends beyond the purely economic.

Where ordinary language proves a barrier to communication, music fills the void; the foreign tourists cannot understand the words of the guru, but respond enthusiastically to the music and dancing (ASB 775). Kabir's words to Lata, which communicate a love that transcends religious barriers, are also described as "music" (ASB 156). The intimate connection between music and language is also evident from the title given, in the novel, to the great singer Majeed Khan—Ustad, or "master poet."[94] Conversely, performance can also demand a conspiratorial silence—shared by both audience and musician—the shattering of which does violence to the performance itself. Maan's inopportune declaration concerning the past employment of singer Ishaq Khan has precisely this effect (ASB 1092). Though his history is known to all present (certainly, at least, to Mahesh Kapoor and to Firoz, who have previously seen Ishaq perform with Saeeda Bai), Maan's public enunciation of it causes discomfort for all present.

The inability to hear a musical performance, however, bespeaks ignorance; Maan's repeated failure to hear Saeeda Bai when she performs for others underlies his willful misunderstanding of their relationship. When turned away from her gate, for the first time "Maan . . . could not make out the sound of singing" (ASB 132) and the second time reports that there "was no sound of music or talk" (ASB 135). The silence, then, that Maan encounters is indicative of Saeeda Bai's unwillingness to receive him. At the same time, Maan's inability to perceive Saeeda Bai's presence in the house—and, by extension, interpret his own inability to obtain admission as a conscious effort on her part to limit Maan's visits—demonstrates his own lack of attunement, which is intimately linked to his selfish passion.

These faults culminate in his violent intrusion into Saeeda Bai's home and his stabbing of Firoz. These two men had, erstwhile, been the best of friends, participating in each other's religious festivities and sharing every aspect of their lives, and possibly also have a sexual relationship. As such,

at least in the early part of the novel, they provide a microcosm of Hindu-Muslim unity. Maan's attack on Firoz thus demonstrates the ease with which even occasional deafness can lead to a violent collapse of communal harmony. If an idyllic friendship is liable to deteriorate into near-lethal violence in a single moment of misunderstanding, any broad-based national experience of cross-communal harmony and friendship is necessarily even more fragile.

It is not at all inappropriate that music should play a parallel role to that of language in *A Suitable Boy* and occasionally even substitute for it. Music has often been likened to speech—it is certainly capable of communicating moods and emotions, and the two share features such as pitch, tone, and volume. Indian music has a particularly close relationship to spoken language, as Andoop Chandola reveals. Each note that can be sounded on the tabla, for instance, corresponds to a character in the Devanagari alphabet and takes its sound and name: "The sound of each stroke is an imitation of a linguistic syllable. Such a syllable is called *bol* in Hindi-Urdu which means literally, 'speech sound, utterance.'"[95] The appropriate syllable may be spoken aloud as the musician beats his drum. There are strict and complex rules governing the way in which notes may be ordered and combined, which, though they produce mostly nonsense words from a linguistic point of view, are akin to a grammar. A number of insults can actually be produced within this grammar, and musicians may employ their instruments in order to engage in friendly invective.[96]

Therefore, not only are oral texts and musical texts similar in nature, but their components are also remarkably alike. Robert Simms echoes Chandola, asserting that Indian classical music possesses its own language.[97] This relationship is particularly relevant in the case of the art-song ghazal, whose "characteristic musical features get pulled together into a composite, yet unified musical communication, unified by the ghazal text."[98] Music also has its own vocabulary, both in English and in Hindi and Urdu. These two types of musical language are freely mixed in *A Suitable Boy:*

> The regally slow unfolding of the alaap, the wide vibratos on the third and sixth degrees, the stately descents in alternating rises and falls, the richness of the Khan Sahib's voice accompanied from time to time by his young disciple, and the invariant, undazzling, solid beat of the tabla created a structure of majesty and perfection that hypnotized both musicians and audience.
>
> (ASB 1092)

Alaap, for instance, is a word from Sanskrit meaning "exposition" and refers to the development of the melody or theme. "Vibrato," on the other hand,

is a standard term from Western music and refers to the quality of the sound.

In *A Suitable Boy,* music is not only a cultural product that necessarily reflects the values and tastes of the society that produces it, but a litmus test of cultural harmony and understanding. Music demonstrates how cultural influences may be negotiated and even merged without giving in to the forces of capitalist homogenization. As such, it enables the performance of the nation as an inclusive and diverse space, which is not restricted in terms of class, caste, or faith. Though such moments of harmony may be fleeting, and inarticulable, they provide an alternative to official, and more problematic, national articulations, and speak to the enduring quality of India's unity and diversity. In this way, *A Suitable Boy* signals its hope for a tolerant future, by representing conflict as avoidable, when sensitive listening to others is taken as a basic social precept, and by positing harmony as an even more natural state, rooted in both India's traditional and modern cultural expressions.

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CHAPTER 3

Parodying Nehru in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and *The Moor's Last Sigh*

Like *The Discovery of India, Midnight's Children* is an attempt both to delimit the boundaries of, and to provide the content for, a modern Indian nation. It spans roughly eighty years in the history of India—from the emergence of nationalism at the turn of the twentieth century to the period of the Emergency and the suspension of democracy under Indira Gandhi—and relates the experiences of one family, whose story is told by Saleem Sinai, one of its last surviving members. *Midnight's Children* met with enormous success, bestowing celebrity status on an erstwhile unknown writer and subsequently earning him the Booker of Bookers in 1993, awarded to the book deemed the best to have won the Booker Prize since its inception.

Much of the scholarship devoted to Rushdie's work in general, and *Midnight's Children* in particular, has concentrated on his use of form and narrative technique. It is for his use of magical realism, inspired by Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Gunter Grass, that Rushdie is particularly famed. His blending of diverse cultural allusions, and the fantastic and the real, creates a story that self-consciously parodies national history while attempting to expand its parameters. As such, parody, for Rushdie, is a form that "enacts both change and cultural continuity."[1] Indeed, the novel's engagement with national history (and its debt, in this regard, to various models of historiography, such as the work of Nietzsche, Foucault, and Gandhi) has received extensive scrutiny.

Though I do not wish to privilege Rushdie's form as a definitive or authentic mode of postcolonial or postmodern discourse, it is necessary to say a few words about his technique in order to elucidate both his Nehruvian

inheritance and his engagement with the problems of nation and cultural diversity, since his magical realism and his political agenda are so intimately connected. His blending of myth and history, for instance, is a central part of his critique of nationalist historiography and its inevitable erasures. Eriks Uskalis goes so far as to assert that myths necessarily "encode resistance to the hegemonic drives found in the narrative of the state," a view that overlooks the fact that the state, too, can deploy myth for its own purposes.[2] Similarly, the disavowal of any distinction between the public and the private that Saleem's story contains—as illustrated when the division of the state of Bombay occurs because the child Saleem loses control of his bicycle—constitutes an important aspect of both the novel's form and content.[3]

Like realism itself, magical realism as a mode is poorly defined, a fact that becomes clear when one considers the disparate ways in which some novels have been classified by different critics.[4] Yet it has come to occupy a central position within understandings of both postcolonialism and postmodernism, a status that, as I alluded to earlier, has also been problematized by Harish Trivedi. The principal critique advanced by postcolonial critics of traditional realism is that the normalizing gaze of realist narration is an ethnographic device that entrenches the otherness—and inferiority—of the objects (rather than the subjects) it depicts. Theo L. D'haen, for instance, equates magical realist discourse with discourse that displaces "privileged centers."[5] Similarly, Stephen Slemon argues that narratives require an element of fantasy in order to counter the homogenizing tendencies of colonial and colonizing discourses.[6]

Magical realism itself combines a surrealist interest in the marvelous and a broad-based desire to resist the homogenizing and universalizing tendencies of both modernism and modernization. Despite this oppositional stance, magical realism actually owes much to modernist experimentations with form, a fact acknowledged by Marquez, one of magical realism's originators.[7] At the same time, any realization of its oppositional politics requires that the magical realist text does not completely eschew the real in favor of the fantastic. The "magical" and the "realism" of magical realism thus simultaneously oppose each other and are interlinked.[8]

Much has already been said about the status of *Midnight's Children* as historiographic metafiction and the novel's privileging of fragmentation and unreliable narration.[9] As such, I will not discuss these attributes in detail, though I do wish to sketch the ways in which these features figure Rushdie's relationship to Nehru. Rather, I wish to focus my reading of *Midnight's Children* on one aspect of the novel that has received very little critical attention: the relationship between India and Pakistan. Rushdie's representation of Indo-Pakistani relations, and of the border between the two

nations, evokes Nehru's concern with delimiting the nation and with juxtaposing his own national ambitions with those of M. A. Jinnah and the Muslim League. In this way, I hope to extend the critical debate on Rushdie's early engagements with nation and diversity, before moving on to consider his later approach to the subject in *The Moor's Last Sigh.*

Rushdie's Nehruvian Inheritance

Nehru's influence permeates *Midnight's Children,* and many of the novel's most discussed features are in some way evocative of that paternity. For instance, Rushdie's construction of the Indian nation as embodied in a single individual—Saleem Sinai—clearly has its antecedent in Nehru's work, in particular his representations of himself in *The Discovery of India.* Though literary analogies between the body politic and the corporeal individual have a long and well-developed tradition, Rushdie's main character, Saleem, whose face is so famously imagined as a map of India, bears a definite Nehruvian stamp.

Though Nehru coyly admits that it is "absurd . . . to think of India or any country as a kind of anthropomorphic entity," the author does so throughout the volume (DI 59). Early on, Nehru identifies the United Provinces as the "heart of Hindustan" (DI 58); when in Cape Comorin, Nehru sees himself as at "the feet of mother India" in *Glimpses of World History* (GWH 56). Like the individual, the nation can, according to Nehru, be "sick," "both in mind and body" (DI 495, 535). With the cultural decay of North India, "the heart seems to petrify, its beats are slower, and gradually this petrifaction and decay spread to the limbs" (DI 223). Like an individual, the nation has a "personality" (DI 505). The body symbolizes the nation as an organic whole, but at the same time creates a certain ambiguity concerning the relationships between the "parts" and their relative importance. Highly charged imagery, such as the heart, used here, suggests a functional but privileged relationship at odds with the ideals of democracy and equality. Though he is modest about his stature in *The Discovery of India,* Nehru also constructed himself as a symbol of the nation and self-consciously made his person a fusion of Muslim and Hindu culture, reflecting his distinctive Kashmiri Brahmin heritage.[10] This was enacted publicly through his choice of clothing, which was a blend of the Hindu and Muslim styles.[11] Indeed, he was keenly aware that he was inexorably linked with the nation in the public mind and responded self-consciously.[12]

If Nehru's attempts to represent and/or "perform" the nation were entirely earnest, however, if occasionally uneasy and tentative, Rushdie's handling of

that trope is strictly parodic. Saleem Sinai's complex heritage—both genetic and environmental—reveals the absurdity of trying to embody any nation, especially one as diverse as India, in a single individual. The biological son of a lower-class Hindu woman and her elite English lover, he is swapped with another child at birth and raised as the son of a Muslim family by a Catholic nurse. As such, through both nature and nurture, Saleem internalizes three of the subcontinent's chief cultural influences.

The novel "celebrates the creative tensions between personal and national identities," even as, I will contend, it argues for a strategic integrity in the latter.[13] In this, it evokes Nehru's interweaving of personal and national histories in both *An Autobiography* and *The Discovery of India.* Similarly, Rushdie's depiction of India as a hybrid space closely echoes Nehru's construction of India as unified in diversity. But while Nehru strove for an impossible degree of accuracy and completeness in his account, even as he acknowledged the difficulties and inevitable limitations of that endeavor, Rushdie's narrator, Saleem, revels in, and flaunts, his errors and draws attention to his omissions. Saleem's application of the notion of *halal* to the narration of history signals an explicit, self-conscious awareness of the exclusions that are an inescapable part of its writing (MC 59). Halal literally means lawful or permitted, and is diametrically opposed to that, within the Islamic faith, which is forbidden or *haram.* A halal version of history would not claim to offer a complete account but, rather, an acceptable one, which left all that was illicit unspoken. By providing the reader with such a flagrantly unreliable narrator—whose use of the concept of halal can only be ironic, given the novel's fascination with the impure and the scandalous—"Rushdie deliberately prevents his readers from being caught up in a story with its own 'organic' life, that progresses uninterrupted, and that creates a completely imagined world."[14]

Therefore, even if for Rushdie "the historical has a clear ontological status," a fact highlighted within the text itself by Saleem's admission that some of the events he recounts—such as the moment of Gandhi's death—may be "wrong," the author at least partially repudiates the writing of history in the traditional sense.[15] At the same time, *Midnight's Children* reinforces the primacy of national mythology, which, for Rushdie, is closely, if implicitly, linked to the legacy of Nehru and his national vision. Saleem's narrative is based on the notion that "to understand just one life, you have to swallow the world," and it therefore not only challenges Western notions of individualism but, indeed, the genres of autobiography and biography, which privilege the heroic individual (MC 109). If Indian society is based on group forms of identification, as Nehru argued, then life writing, despite

its popularity with Indian nationalist leaders, is singularly inappropriate as a national genre. Instead, the interpenetration of life writing and national history that characterizes Nehru's writing, in which the "author attempts to describe and locate . . . his own self . . . by coming to terms with the . . . world," emerges as a more authentic mode of narration.[16]

If, in order to understand just one life the reader must "swallow the world," it should be no surprise that in order to describe the nation one need also look beyond its borders. Yet, as I will argue, if unstable individual identities enable a liberating hybridity, uncertain national boundaries prove far more problematic. National boundaries are a source of conflict between countries—and thus a literal cause of death and destruction—and sites of ontological slippage where dangerous annihilations of subjectivity and morality occur. It is also in addressing transnational conflict that the tensions inherent in *Midnight's Children*'s hybrid form are most evident. Since autobiographical narrative is necessarily circular (often ending and beginning with the moment of writing), and national narratives are linear, *Midnight's Children,* like *The Discovery of India,* partakes in both kinds of narration.[17] While circularity can offer an escape from the confines of teleological narration, and as such has been cast as both liberating and politically subversive, the borderlands, as places of cyclical conflict, serve as a reminder of the potentially confining aspect of circularity.

Midnight's Children explicitly endorses Benedict Anderson's concept of the imagined community, claiming that India is

> quite imaginary . . . a mythical land, a country which would never exist except by the efforts of a phenomenal collective will—except in a dream we all agreed to dream; it was a mass fantasy shared in varying degrees by Bengali and Punjabi, Madrasi and Jat, and would periodically need the sanctification and renewal which can only be provided by rituals of blood.
>
> (MC 112)

The "rituals of blood" in which the nation is performed inevitably threaten the very fabric of that nation, as they lead to the death both of its citizens and of the ideals on which the nation is founded. Nowhere is this more evident than in Saleem's description of Bangladesh's secession from Pakistan in 1971, the context of a violent conflict that India entered on the side of Bangladesh, just six years after an Indo-Pakistani war over the issue of Kashmir. If, for Rushdie, India's espousal of hybridity is always juxtaposed with Pakistan's self-declared purity, then any conflict between the two nations inevitably represents a rivalry of competing national myths.

Mapping India

A nation-state, by definition, is a geopolitical entity, and therefore a concern for geography is necessarily manifest in *The Discovery of India.* Questions concerning boundaries were key to much of the opposition to the Indian National Congress—not only from communalist organizations but from the princely states as well. In this context, Nehru clearly wished to lay claim to the widest possible Indian nation, one that included all of colonial India. In addition, Nehru's attachment to the areas that now form the nations of Pakistan and Bangladesh had to be distinguished from the forces of political chance that had seen India joined to Afghanistan and Burma (two areas outside of Nehru's imagined India) at earlier periods. Even among those nationalists who supported the Congress party, there was no consensus about the geographical boundaries of India, and Burma had at times been considered part of India by some nationalists.[18] Nor does Nehru include modern Sri Lanka in his imagined community, despite the fact that Sri Lankan Tamil culture is continuous with southern Indian culture.[19]

National borders posed no small problem, particularly in the case of Afghanistan, which is culturally contiguous with what is now northern Pakistan.[20] In 1944, at the time of writing, the Raj had already imposed a border in the northeast between India and Burma, and this division appears to have been accepted by Nehru. Nor are borders the only national limits with which *The Discovery of India* is concerned. The cultural content of the nation, in the broadest sense, also required elucidation. In order to avoid an absurd degree of essentialism and classicization, the many cultural practices (including, but not limited to, the English language, Islam, and Chinese philosophy) originally imported into the region from beyond the borderlines, but since embraced in the subcontinent, also had to be distinguished from undesirable foreign elements. As a result, political borders were inexorably tied to fundamental issues of cultural and national identity.

Paradoxically, the external geographic boundaries of Nehru's imagined India are at least partially established in his discussions of international relations. In chapter 5 of *The Discovery of India,* India is implicitly defined against China, Greece, and Iran, a ploy that allows the author to assume an unproblematic definition for all these countries. In his discussions of ancient and medieval international relations, Nehru imposes the structure of the modern nation-state on older forms of sociopolitical organization. Furthermore, a level of cultural autonomy is necessarily assumed in discussions of intellectual exchange. The treatment of international relations thus becomes a surrogate for a kind of strategic essentialism in which the entity called India is simultaneously stable and fluid.

Indo-Pakistani relations have been characterized by conflict since the two nations' inception. The border between India and Pakistan, both in the Rann of Kutch (just south of Sind) and, more contentiously, in Kashmir, has been a subject of dispute almost from the moment of Partition.[21] The first declared war between them occurred in 1965 and resulted, more or less, in the perpetuation of the status quo, leaving key questions about the future of Kashmir unresolved. Though the 1971 war against Pakistan was, from India's point of view, militarily successful, very popular, and a personal triumph for Indira Gandhi, it also situated India in an ideologically ambiguous position. There were sound arguments in favor of the war—India needed to alleviate the conditions of the millions of Bangladeshi refugees, both for their sake and its own, and wanted to support the legitimate, democratically articulated wish for Bangladeshi self-determination.[22] But the right to national self-determination based on ethnic or linguistic difference was not a principle that India accepted, either in theory, as indicated by Nehru's steadfast rejections of such claims in *The Discovery of India,* or in practice, as is evident from the insistence, prior to independence, that all of colonial India form a single nation-state, and the rejection, after independence, of all other secessionist claims. Since India defined itself as both secular and statist, it could not admit the possibility that any politically desirable objective could be better achieved outside the confines of the Indian nation-state. As other nations (i.e., Pakistan) did not embrace both of these ideas, secession from them, in contrast, could be legitimate.[23] Unity and diversity, then, emerges as India's exclusive prerogative—while India claims to best serve its diverse cultural groups by incorporating them within the nation, the demands of dominated cultural groups outside India can only be recognized through separation from the nation-state.

This utterly contradictory stand tests not only the limits of Nehru's secular position but of the form and narration of *Midnight's Children.* During the section of the novel in which the 1971 war is depicted, Saleem becomes the very opposite of all those things he is usually understood to epitomize. The war in Bangladesh is one of the few historical events in the novel in which Saleem is figured as a legitimate participant, but he acts unconsciously, having lost his capacity for conscious thought after being hit on the head with a spittoon. Saleem fights against nationalism in the war, thus signaling his opposition to the teleological narrative of cultural autonomy, which, in our times, nearly always has the nation as its end. Instead, he battles for a religious identity that transcends national boundaries, and is on the side of political subjugation, since the war was prompted by the western wing's refusal to recognize the right of the eastern wing to democratic self-representation. Saleem's return to India at the end of the war is symbolic,

for the loss of Bangladesh signals the final bankruptcy, for Rushdie, of the Pakistan concept. Reality itself cannot bear the violence and ideological betrayal of this conflict (MC 375).

Saleem fights for Pakistan despite the fact that his presence there makes a mockery of that nation's mythology from the outset. When in the "Land of the Pure," Saleem becomes tainted by the "cess-pit stink of . . . iniquities," a result of his predilection for prostitutes and his incestuous love for his sister (MC 329). Yet he also falls under the spell of purity, as is indicated by his obsession with classification (MC 317). An obsession with classification is, of course, one of the primary characteristics of Orientalism and anathema to the formation of fluid, hybrid identities.[24] Indeed, the dangers of classification are in evidence throughout the novel. Ahmed Sinai, Saleem's father, becomes the victim of his own invented genealogy. Having granted himself Mughal ancestry in order to impress a departing member of the Raj, William Methwold (MC 110), he later spends countless hours trying in vain to recall the family curse—the supposed inheritance of this noble line (MC 203). Genealogy, then, partakes of the fallibility and fictionalization to which history and memory are also vulnerable. Ahmed's brother in-law Mustapha has a parallel fixation, and it is his obsession with lineage that enables the midnight's children (with the exception of Shiva) to be destroyed (MC 391). In demonizing this fascination with origins, the novel implicitly celebrates miscegenation and points to the dangers of any obsession with purity. The quest for origins has, as its logical end, the brutality of social Darwinism and eugenics.[25]

Jamila Singer, who becomes synonymous with the Voice of Pakistan (national Pakistani radio) and a "sword for purity"—a phrase that suggests the violence of the concept (MC 315)—never travels to the eastern wing of that country (MC 331). The existence of Bangladesh as a separate, discrete nation is therefore implied even before the account of the war in which it was to find concrete political expression. Jamila's representative status is further problematized by Saleem's realization that his feelings for her are actually a manifestation of his "love of country," for his "true birth-sister, India herself" (MC 385). Across Pakistan, her voice galvanizes the people for war; for Saleem, Jamila evokes the enemy across the border, who cannot hear her at all. Furthermore, given the inappropriateness of his feelings, it seems that the entire notion of patriotism is being called into question. The novel's declaration that Saleem achieves purity through the 1965 war, in which the rest of his family, other than Jamila, perish, can only be ironic. If the bloody war in which Bangladesh wins its independence, and in which the soldiers of the western wing demonstrated conclusively the fallacy of their homeland's name by massacring and raping their coreligionists in the east, is a

reflection of Saleem's recently achieved purity, then purity is clearly of little value in *Midnight's Children.*

Whereas Nehru could be deliberately vague about the issues of national boundaries, by the time of Rushdie's birth, Partition was already a fait accompli. Indeed, *The Discovery of India,* as I have shown, functions, at least in part, to argue for a particular inscription of national boundaries on the subcontinent, which was arguably anachronistic even at the time of composition. Yet, Rushdie, as well, "couldn't help but persist in holding on to India's geopolitical wholeness as both an idea and an ideal."[26] The (from Rushdie's point of view) undesired Indo-Pakistani border is solid insofar as it serves to delineate the difference between Nehru's ideology of unity and diversity and Jinnah's equation of religion with nation; but insofar that it represents an accession to the latter's two-nation theory, the border represents an intellectual error that cannot, by definition, have much cultural significance. As both a geopolitical truth and an ideological fiction, the "two nations" of the subcontinent are thus both irreparably torn asunder and inexorably tied together, with the border between them both a site of conjunction and disjunction.

Pakistan is an absence in the novel, however, more than a presence. When Saleem and his unit embark on a mission in East Pakistan, the narrator states simply that they are "not in India" (MC 355), thereby evoking the fear that "to travel is to be nowhere."[27] While Saleem's early experiences in India are so packed with events and meanings that the novel can barely contain them, Saleem's experience of Pakistan is summarized as "[f]our years of nothing" (MC 292). Those events that do occur are qualified in terms of absence: the years of life in Pakistan are years of being away from, and being without, the things Saleem holds dear; they are also described as a time of separation (MC 292). The only events and people that truly matter remain in India.

As a place without memory, Pakistan holds no place for the children of midnight and their stories.[28] Saleem claims to invade Pakistan when his family moves there, words that suggest his hostility to that country (MC 309). Symbolically, then, the border between India and Pakistan, representative of diametrically opposed ideologies, seems absolute. Even the thought-transmissions of the midnight's children cannot penetrate Pakistani airspace. Are there magical children north of the Indo-Pakistani border? This possibility is pointedly neglected. In Pakistan, Saleem discovers, instead, the nonhuman children of midnight: "Violence, corruption, poverty, generals, chaos, greed" (MC 291). The perimeter of modern India circumscribes a specifically national hope absent from or irrelevant to nations elsewhere. Pakistan, the land of the pure, is presumably not

hospitable to the blurring of boundaries that the midnight's children, with their aspects of the supernatural, represent.

The self, both individual and communal, is invariably constituted with reference to others, a tendency that, as *Midnight's Children* illustrates, can also be extended to imaginings of the nation. Indeed, national self-construction involves

> readings of a place as home, where there is imagined to be the security of . . . stability and an apparently reassuring boundedness. Such understandings of the identity of places require them to . . . establish their identity through negative counterposition with the Other beyond the boundaries.[29]

So central is the construction of the cultural other to both past and present understandings of the self that Zygmunt Bauman goes so far as to argue that if "strangers . . . did not exist they would have to be invented."[30] Any imagining of the nation inevitability involves a certain invocation of essentialisms, without which no collective labelings are possible.[31] In the context of the two-nation theory, Partition, and the history of conflict between India and Pakistan, it is hardly surprising that a heightened process of this "negative counterposition," described above, has the potential to produce a vision of India and Pakistan that constructs these two countries as binary opposites, completely sealed off from each other.

Viewed in this way, membership of one national community or the other becomes absolute; there is no conceptual space for migrant identities. To cross the border between India and Pakistan would necessitate an individual to be transformed into his or her opposite. It does seem initially as though this is what has happened to Saleem after his move to Pakistan, a journey that culminates in his participation in the 1971 war. This utter transformation occurs not once, but twice; after the war, Saleem returns to India, reuniting with at least one of the midnight's children and moving to a communist community (a phenomenon certainly more Indian than Pakistani). While Gloria Anzaldua's seminal study envisions the border as a place where the collision of binaries opened up a transgressive space in which hegemonies could be challenged and differences potentially healed, Rushdie imagines the border in much starker terms.[32] Though the migrant subject, according to Anzaldua, may be marginalized, he or she nevertheless challenges dominant ideologies. Saleem's movement into Pakistan neither marginalizes him (indeed, his family seems to acquire increased wealth and prominence) nor enables him to effectively challenge the divide between India's espousal of unity and diversity and Pakistan's espousal of purity; the synthesis of these two principles is manifest only in the grotesque and

incestuous love for his sister, who is both a symbol of India, evocative of the midnight's children and, as mentioned earlier, of purity.

Yet, like the border between the United States and Mexico, the border between India and Pakistan has been the site of major population exchange. This movement challenges the ability of both nations to view themselves as bounded. Indeed,

> [t]ravelling . . . suggests the possibility of a dialectical relationship between that which lies within the boundaries, and that which lies without. The boundary is less a wall than a connection, a relationship.[33]

In crossing the border, travelers necessarily destabilize the distinction between self and other, if only momentarily.[34] In the liminal terrain that lies between two nations, issues of belonging dissipate, since the individual can no longer be located within any national community.

Thus, while the generalized characteristics that serve to distinguish Pakistani and Indian identities are sharply delineated, the actual line of control that divides India and Pakistan, in contrast, is depicted as a surreal, "amphibious zone" (MC 335). The term "amphibious," with its yoking of land and water, suggests a blurring of boundaries that resists the absolutism of national borders. The disorienting experiences of the young soldiers from both nations displace the conflict from a mappable location into the symbolic plain. The jungle, where Saleem, along with his army unit, flees to escape the horror of war in the cities of Bengal is "historyless" and, like the Rann of Kutch (another disputed border region), a realm of nightmares (MC 360). While the soldiers wander the Sundarbans, all binary distinctions disappear, even that between life and death. Not only are the men pursued by the voices of those they have killed (MC 365), but they have their lives saved by Kali (they take shelter in her temple), who also plots to destroy them through her sirens, who can only be described as "real enough" (MC 366–367). By making love to these women/piles of bone, the four men of the unit themselves begin to turn into ghosts—surely a suitable fate for soldiers whose unit, officially, did not exist and whose crimes, according to the military authorities, were never committed. Saleem is the only member of his unit to survive this experience, perhaps because at this stage in the novel he is not even constructed as fully human, having lost his memory, his connection to history, and even his enjoyment of physical sensation. Though the border, for Anzaldua, is a place of discomfort, it is, for Rushdie, the site of total annihilation.

If India is the country of miscegenation and Pakistan the land of the pure, then the disputed territory that lies between the two states must be

no less than the boundary between purity and impurity. Such a place is both logically and practically impossible. No wonder, then, that the borderland is a zone of fantasy. Kashmir, as a contested territory, occupies a special place both within *Midnight's Children* and in Indian national history. It is, at the very least, a fortuitous coincidence that Shiva/Saleem, like Nehru and Rushdie himself, are of Kashmiri heritage. Kashmir is the location where *The Discovery of India* both begins and ends. While for Nehru, Kashmir was the site of Hindu-Muslim cultural exchange and harmony, for Rushdie it sits at the junction of the old and the new. A place where faith is both lost and regained, it evokes India's passage into modernity. Kashmir is where the old Orientalist view of the romantic East dies, symbolized by the suicide of Ilse, a friend of Aadam Aziz (Saleem's grandfather) from Germany (MC 30). Kashmir is not only where the ageless boatman, Tai, gives way, reluctantly, to the man of science, Aadam Aziz, but also the place where a hair of the Prophet, a Muslim religious relic, goes missing, an event that, both in its execution and its aftermath, signals the rise of a new brand of religious fervor (MC 277).

When Saleem returns to India after the war in Bangladesh, he cannot easily reenter the metaphorical space of the Indian nation. Nor, occurring while Saleem is an invisible and disembodied presence within a magical basket, does his homecoming herald a straightforward return to agency, though it is apparently a passage back to consciousness and wholeness. Saleem feels the "world slip away" and is reminded of the outside world only by the presence of his silver spittoon (MC 381). This stereotyped, "Eastern" object, whose significance as a leitmotif is at least partially satirical, seems to return Saleem to a very "Western" state of individual identity and agency. Though the narrative returns to the first person (the "buddha" section, in which Saleem loses his identity, is narrated in the third person), performing Saleem's recovery of subjectivity, his identity is now more problematic than ever. After the war, Saleem finds that he has been stripped of all official identity—lacking papers from either nation, a criminal to both due to his wartime activities, he is not at home in India, Bangladesh, or Pakistan.

His lack of official identity means that the only community now open to Saleem is both materially impoverished and, tellingly, dedicated to the production (if not the consumption) of illusion. Picture Singh, the ghetto's leader, is the harbinger of a society "that respects cultural difference and allows all points of views to be expressed."[35] He appears to Saleem as "the greatest man [he] ever met," capable of arbitrating among ideological opponents (MC 397). This ideal community is doomed, however, flattened by the national leadership in a misguided attempt at beautification and economic development (MC 429). After this event, Picture Singh seems to

wither away and loses effective leadership of the ghetto, which itself has become transient and elusive (MC 446). Finally, Picture Singh travels to Bombay to confront his rival for the title of most charming man in the world, and though he is ultimately triumphant, he is so drained by the attempt that he fades irredeemably into the background (MC 456). Though in the end even Picture Singh is seduced by the lure of classification—which destroys so many other characters—Rushdie's novel does not fall prey to cultural binaries as easily as Clement Hawes has suggested.[36] Despite the fact that *Midnight's Children* sets up a dialectical relationship between purity and impurity—Pakistan and India—the distinction repeatedly collapses because the boundary between the two cannot be delineated. However, despite demonstrating the destructive effect of the collision of opposing ideologies in the borderlands, *Midnight's Children,* in its depiction of these border regions, envisions very little possibility for hybridity or synthesis.

(Re)Imagining Cultural Diversity through Spanish Eyes

The Moor's Last Sigh, Rushdie's fifth novel, looks, once again, at the history of India, this time through the eyes of Moraes Zogoiby and his family. Moraes is born ten years after Saleem, and this novel takes into account the events of the fourteen years that separate the publication of *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995) from *Midnight's Children* (1981). Moraes, or the Moor, narrates his family and personal history, which stretches from the period of his grandparents, and the early stirrings of the independence movement, to his own death in the early 1990s. At the center of the narrative is his mother, Aurora, a renowned artist, who has made her only son the dominant subject of many of her works. The visual arts are therefore one of the novel's major preoccupations.

The Moor's Last Sigh further develops many of the themes and strategies already present in *Midnight's Children.* Once again, a central figure, characterized by ambiguous, hybrid ancestry and physical abnormality, narrates his story and that of his family to a listener within the novel under conditions of duress. Once again, fundamentalism is critiqued, and the history of the nation is shown to be a construct that refuses to adhere to the traditional categories of genre and conventions of narrative. In several ways, however, *The Moor's Last Sigh* marks a departure from Rushdie's earlier national allegory. I will argue that Rushdie's attitude toward hybridity and the nation have altered in subtle, but significant, ways. *The Moor's Last Sigh* attempts to posit, albeit in a tentative fashion, a social model to replace the one whose inadequacy was so clearly demonstrated in the earlier novel and, indeed, is a parody of *Midnight's Children.*[37] Unlike Rushdie's earlier work,

this novel recognizes that fragmentation can pose at least as great a threat to the nation as an insistence upon homogeneity: "There's a flip side to pluralism; the down side can be confusion, formlessness, chaos, a lack of vision or singleness of purpose . . . Sometimes those who have a clearer view get further."[38] As such, Rushdie's ironizing is more tempered than in the earlier novel, and parody becomes just one of the many modes through which the fiction operates.

In *The Moor's Last Sigh* Rushdie utilizes the history of medieval Spain in order to warn of the dire cultural consequences of too great a focus on purity. By mapping contemporary India and its current domination by religious fundamentalism onto the fall of moorish Spain and the accompanying expulsion of Jews and Muslims from Iberia, Rushdie hints at the traumatic, and even catastrophic, potential of India's present course. Iberia's cultural decline after 1492, which has generally been linked, either implicitly or explicitly, to the reconquest, can thus be argued to be inseparable from its fanatical obsession with purity, which found ultimate expression in the Inquisition. Correspondingly, the rise of Hindu fundamentalism, Rushdie suggests, may herald the artistic demise of an India in which fertile miscegenation is rejected. In such an India, hybridity might become nothing more than a sort of trendy, but empty, nostalgia. Indeed, Graham Huggan argues that multiculturalism in the West already fulfils this role, aiding the marketing of books by providing an accessible taste of the exotic.[39]

While in *Midnight's Children,* then, purity was the prerogative of Pakistan and unity in diversity that of India, *The Moor's Last Sigh* tacitly acknowledges that this concern with purity has also become a feature of Indian politics and is a particular feature of Hindu fundamentalism on the subcontinent.[40] At the same time, I will argue that Rushdie's embrace of fragmentation is far more tentative than in the earlier novel; the status of hybridity itself is also far more problematic. That Rushdie's politics has changed is perhaps most evident from the fate of Aadam Sinai, who seemed, at the end of *Midnight's Children,* to represent the latent potential of a new and hardier generation. In *The Moor's Last Sigh,* as the adopted son of Abraham Zogoiby, he embraces the corruption of the underworld and contributes to the destruction of Bombay, Rushdie's mecca of cultural diversity.[41] Abraham is Moraes's biological father, but Aadam displaces the Moor in his father's affection, suggesting the triumph of his univocal, capitalist perspective over the Moor's more fragmented and politically uncertain one.

If the ability to occupy multiple subject positions is lauded in *Midnight's Children,* slippery subjectivities are viewed far more tentatively in *The Moor's*

Last Sigh. Uma, perhaps the novel's ultimate chameleon, is a force of destruction, the "bad egg" that tears apart the Moor's family. Despite, or perhaps because of, her own flexible identity, she represents a "defeat for the pluralist philosophy"; her many performances are signs of dishonesty and madness, rather than of a liberating impurity (MLS 272). Uma's revisionist personal history threateningly crosses the boundary between metaphor and lie, and in so doing reinforces the need for just such a boundary (MLS 270). This emphasis on dishonesty is evocative of the writings of M. K. Gandhi, for whom untruth was the greatest of all evils and a term he used with the strongest possible condemnation to describe his attitude to, among other things, the two-nation theory.[42]

Though Moraes provides a subject for Aurora's paintings, and thus enables her representations of the nation, he too is characterized by dangerous ambiguities that underscore the ambivalence of his availability as artistic subject. He might, equally, be the biological son of Nehru, or of the corrupt and violent, but loving, Abraham. The Moor's personality dissolves during his incarceration in Bombay Central, enabling him to be recreated later by Raman Fielding as a violent thug in the service of Hindu fundamentalism (MLS 288). He is as much the medium as the message, to be molded by Aurora, Vasco, Uma, or perhaps anyone, a "zombie" (MLS 294). Since he cannot create art himself—a condition symbolized by his crippled right hand—he becomes the work itself and demonstrates a plasticity similar to Uma's.[43]

Moraes's best gift for nationalist consolidation is perhaps his cooking (MLS 296). Yet this enactment of "cultural hybridity" (which also appears in *The Satanic Verses*) "works only by ignoring the serious dietary commitments religions often demand of their followers and thus trivializing the whole issue of food."[44] The fact that he realizes this ability in the service of Mainduck only further emphasizes his cooking as, at best, an insubstantial practice of hybridity. This, again, contrasts strongly with *Midnight's Children,* in which cooking provides key metaphors for conceptualizing the nation and its history and forms a central part of the novel's plot. Moraes, like Uma, embodies a potentially dangerous indeterminacy. His fate echoes Nehru's fear that a nation without a positive mythology might become something to deplore (DI 247).

This emphasis on essentialism and individual autonomy at the expense of hybridity and multiplicity as a means of coming to terms with diversity is very much in keeping with the ethos of al-Andalus. Though there were periods in which religious minorities were treated with considerable tolerance, that acceptance was usually predicated on their separation from the community as a whole.[45] In other words, individual communities led parallel

lives in all but the most elite court circles. It is therefore likely that actual miscegenation was unusual and, though there were certainly many instances of religious conversion, this process was viewed as one of linear and absolute transformation, not at all conducive to any kind of hybridity.[46]

As such, al-Andalus offers, at best, a highly problematic model for religious tolerance and cultural harmony. Indeed, given that medieval Iberian society operated prior to, and outside of, modern conceptions of nation, citizenship, and individuality, it is a highly problematic as a model for any contemporary society. Explicitly hierarchical and even antiegalitarian, such a society collides violently with the Nehruvian ideals of secularism and social democracy, which Rushdie seems to have embraced less problematically in *Midnight's Children.* A shared monotheism was almost certainly key to the maintenance of any kind of religious tolerance in moorish Iberia—contemporary India offers a radically different spiritual map. The perceived idolatry of many Hindus is an anathema to orthodox Muslims. On the other hand, the tendency toward univocality in Muslim theology is incomprehensible to upholders of the Hindu faith. Thus, the kinds of theological borrowings that facilitated interfaith tolerance in medieval Spain are inevitably more difficult in India. As a result, I contend that Iberian history cannot be easily reclaimed for the sort of utopian multicultural community that some of Rushdie's critics would have it represent.[47]

Furthermore, despite the fact that Spain's golden age has been much celebrated by poets and artists, the history of medieval Spain can hardly be said to be one of uninterrupted cultural collaboration and peaceful coexistence. Indeed, Maimonides, one of the great thinkers conventionally associated with that time and place, left Iberia early in his career to take up residence in Egypt as a result of the persecution he experienced at the hands of the local Muslim rulers.[48] The heyday of al-Andalus was relatively brief, with the principality of Granada (whose fall is depicted by both Aurora and Vasco da Gama in *The Moor's Last Sigh*) outlasting the rest of this Muslim outpost by several hundred years. Granada, however, was but a faint echo of al-Andalus's glory of the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries. Not only was Granada a very small district, surrounded by hostility on all sides, but, in it, the intellectual accomplishments that are associated with earlier periods were also greatly reduced in quality and quantity.

This cultural decline was simultaneous with an actual demographic shift away from the multiplicity that had characterized al-Andalus. Christians were nearly or entirely absent from Granada, and the principality was home to just a tiny number of Jews.[49] Moorish Spain partook in the rise of anti-Semitism, which afflicted the whole of Iberia from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries. So inhospitable did that region become to Jewish life that

in 1391 alone, 40 percent of the Jewish population disappeared, through a combination of violence, conversion, and emigration.[50] The shared high culture, which defined medieval Spain's golden age, had disappeared. Thus, the literary traditions that lament the fall of Granada—recapitulated in Rushdie's novel through the art of its characters—do not actually mourn the passing of an especially tolerant or artistically flourishing society.

Indeed, the best parallel to Granada in *The Moor's Last Sigh* may well be Cochin, where the blue Chinese tiles of the synagogue evoke the multicultural past of South India, but also point to a heritage falling into disrepair and disuse. Only remnants of the Jewish community remain in South India, the majority having emigrated, for better or for worse, to Israel. It is in Bombay, not Cochin, that Aurora can raise her mixed-faith family and produce the bulk of her art. Her imagined Alhambra, with its mythic invocation of medieval Spain and her own South Indian childhood, locates the idyllic diversity she depicts firmly in a nostalgic past (despite its placement on Malabar Hill).[51]

Visualizing Indian Culture

In *The Moor's Last Sigh* the history of medieval Spain is invoked through Aurora's paintings, which are set in an imaginary land, alternately dubbed Mooristan and Palimpstine. Furthermore, it is in "Aurora's paintings" that "Rushdie's pluralist values find their most elaborate and original expression."[52] It is thus to Aurora's paintings that I now turn my attention. The names Mooristan and Palimpstine implicitly recall Pakistan and Palestine—two areas associated in recent history with religious strife. As such, they are ironic, for they evoke the opposite of what they are intended to convey within the context of Aurora's speech and art. Mooristan is the "[p]lace where worlds collide, flow in and out of one another" to create "[o]ne universe, one dimension, one country, one dream," and hence, also an idealized and abstracted vision of Nehru's multicultural nation (MLS 226).

Similarly, Palimpstine is clearly a play on palimpsest, which suggests a layering of realities, with lower strata incompletely obscured by higher ones. It seems likely that Rushdie has "borrowed the trope of the palimpsest from Nehru, who pictured Indian history as a palimpsest of successful intercultural exchanges that the new nation would constitutionally extend and guarantee."[53] Though the image of the palimpsest, or twice-written scroll, with its suggestion of simultaneity and succession, might point toward a nonlinear concept of history and identity, the idealization of perfect erasure is also implicit in the term itself; in the term's earliest usage it connoted a surface that could be wiped clean, like a slate.

With the literal Muslim and Jewish presence in Spain erased in 1492 through the culmination of the Inquisition in the expulsion of all non-Christians from the Iberian Peninsula, only the landscape bore witness to the flourishing hybrid culture that had been. One example is the famed Cordoba mosque, now used as a church. Its very structure was an exploration of cultural relations and religious dialogue. Its design "mirrors an interest in spatial focus found in other Islamic monuments" but also draws on Christian architectural traditions in Spain—the mihrab (chamber where the Koran would have been kept) closely resembles an apse.[54] This layout made possible a procession with the Koran during the service, as it was removed from the mihrab and brought forward to be read. This use of spectacle almost certainly reflects the influence of Christian ritual and it has not been recorded elsewhere. Like other Islamic buildings, it is decorated by quotations from the Koran—in this case from the third Sura, a section in which nonbelievers engage in dialogue with Muslims, and in which the shared divine origin of the Old and New Testaments and Koran is confirmed.[55] Culturally and religiously then, the mosque's design is an attempt to create a "fabric of shared cultural meaning," whose hybridity was presented textually, spatially, and visually, and was thus available even to the illiterate majority who would have been excluded from al-Andalus' shared, elite, intellectual culture.[56] Its architectural uniqueness and striking appearance are inseparable from its social function.

The synthesis of elements of diverse origins as a means of representing and idealizing cultural diversity has a well-established history in the world of Indian art and architecture as well. The distinctive Mughal architectural style, epitomized today by structures such as the Red Fort in Agra and the Taj Mahal, is a prime illustration of this. These structures combine the traditionally Muslim dome, the Christian arch, and images of the lotus flower—an important Hindu icon—in order to reflect the harmonious coexistence of these groups in Indian society (or at least a desire for it).[57] In this context, cultural diversity is also an aesthetic principle, for it enables the production of a unique and beautiful whole, which is more than the sum of its parts. By incorporating such overt symbolism into their royal structures, the Mughals implicitly constructed themselves as Indian, rather than exclusively Muslim, leaders.

This tendency toward cultural synthesis is also evident in the history of Indian painting. Despite the Islamic theological suspicion of representational art, Muslims were active both in the production and commissioning of painting. In general, throughout Indian history, "the Indian artist was prepared to serve any patron regardless of personal belief."[58] Both religious and secular subjects found favor. Akbar was fond of fable books, and one

of the earliest Mughal paintings is *The Ape Outsmarts Thieves,* an illustration of a tale by Brahmin Bidpai (clearly a Hindu), which is thought to have been painted under the supervision of Abd Us-Samad and Mir Sayyid Ali (Muslim painters), if it was not, in fact, executed by them. Its style has been described as "thoroughly synthesized" and "drawn mostly from Safavi and indigenous elements."[59] Akbar also commissioned paintings in order to "explain Hinduism to his Muslim courtiers."[60] As such, hybridity is intrinsic to the birth of the Mughal court painting tradition.

Indeed, Akbar framed his own desire for tolerance and synthesis in visual and aesthetic terms, stating: "The rational contents of different religions and faiths, should be translated in the language of each, and that the rose garden of the traditional aspects of each religion should, as far as possible, be cleared of the thorns of bigotry."[61] Akbar was himself illiterate, but was nevertheless extremely concerned with texts; he commissioned them in abundance and they were nearly always lavishly illustrated. One of the most notable was the Akbarnama, a record of his own exploits. Later emperors, such as Jahangir, were to commission similar projects. These works formed the basis of a public, secular, and national history; as a result, they represent a milestone in South Asian historiography. Akbar and the art he patronized thus not only lay the foundations of the nation geographically but, perhaps more importantly, did so imaginatively.

As a form of expression that transcended, in many ways, traditional class, caste, and religious affiliations, and overcame the problem of illiteracy, which severely limited the appeal of other forms of political articulation, the visual arts quite naturally captured the attention of nationalist activists. This interest took several forms, which are worth considering, for they constitute the background against which Rushdie's consideration of art and the artist is implicitly set. Indian scholars constructed an artistic tradition whose history and accomplishments could be set against those of Europe. Whereas Western scholars had initially maintained that Indian sculpture, for instance, was simply a shadow of the Greek, Indian critics strongly contested this view, arguing that Indian art had evolved independently from and alongside the Greek, rather than deriving from it.[62] Indian art critics such as Ananda K. Coomaraswamy participated in this classicization process, which characterizes nationalist historiography.[63] This heightened attention to the classical period threatened—by excluding Muslim, Sikh, and other contributions—to have the same divisive effect in the arts as in other fields.

Such exclusions invariably threatened the status of the nation as multicultural, by implicitly locating minority religious groups outside of what was emerging as a national artistic tradition. Muslims in particular were

positioned as marginal to this national tradition. Indisputable examples of aesthetic accomplishment—the Taj Mahal, for instance—were praised for their essential Indianness rather than for any distinctive Muslim quality.[64] This was not necessarily an endorsement of fruitful synthesis, but rather a hierarchical, threatening absorption of Muslim influences.

This, too, often led to the neglect of painting as a genre, despite the fact that painting has a rich tradition on the subcontinent. There were undeniable Muslim aspects of painting as well as influences from East Asia, which strained the connection between India and Greece that sympathetic English critics had proposed.[65] That being the case, it is perhaps not unexpected to discover that nationalist painting—linked, as I will discuss below, to colonial institutions—was dominated by a rather small number of practitioners. Aurora's supremely representative capacity in *The Moor's Last Sigh* and her domination of the artistic practice of an entire nation are not without their historical precedent. Abanindranath Tagore was particularly influential, both as an artist and as assistant director of the government-sponsored Calcutta Art College. His painted image of Mother India, a composite of contemporary sociopolitical referents and Hindu iconography, is perhaps the best known and most celebrated of his works. It depicts a goddess figure, "realistically" rendered, who holds in each of her hands items of significance to the national movement, denoting food, clothing, learning, and spiritual salvation.[66] She thus effectively synthesizes the politics of *swadeshi* with Hinduism as well as Western formal influences.

Abanindranath's style was characterized by its moodiness and its washes, aspects which he also introduced into his revision of the Mughal miniature painting.[67] This style spread throughout India and was taken up by the Government's other art colleges. Muslim themes and artists are conspicuously absent from Abanindranath's circle and, in consequence, from the history of nationalist art and the nationalist art histories of the modern period. Though the Calcutta artists were instrumental in reviving interest in miniature painting, and Abanindranath himself produced several paintings that were influenced by that tradition, few hereditary practitioners of that form came forward to join his movement. As such, the art of the Bengali renaissance is severely limited from a national perspective, particularly one that privileges cultural diversity. There were, of course, other centers of artistic activity in colonial India, but none produced a specifically national or nationalist art to rival that of Calcutta. There is thus a glaring absence at the heart of India's national art history, which provides an ideal entry for Rushdie.

Bombay, which, for Rushdie, epitomizes the condition of the postcolonial city, was the major exception to the nationalist art trend.[68] The Bombay

art college never adopted the new style, nor did any notable Abanindranath followers emerge from that corner of the subcontinent. With the Bengal renaissance conventionally placed at the center of any account of twentieth-century art on the subcontinent, Bombay has been virtually written out of India's modern art history. Yet the Bombay art school was the only one formed on the initiative of an Indian, Jamshetjee Jeejeebhoy.[69] Furthermore, soon after independence, Bombay became the home of the influential, albeit short-lived, progressive artists' movement, which was closely aligned with the progressive writers' association.[70] A number of these writers, such as Sadat Hasan Manto, make cameo appearances in *The Moor's Last Sigh* as admirers of Aurora's work.

Spurred by European refugees, these artists sought to marry their aesthetic practice with left-wing activist politics, as their literary peers were doing. This movement did include practitioners from more diverse religious backgrounds, whose nationalism was somewhat less constrained by regional and religious concerns. Despite the limitations of the progressive movement (it neither endured nor spread extensively), it proved to be one of the most influential and significant aesthetic movement in India's independent history.[71] The individual participants in the progressive artists' association went on to distinguished careers in their own right.

Art of the Nation in *The Moor's Last Sigh*

The parallels between Rushdie's construction and the actual movement are so numerous as to be unmistakable. Indeed, the main patron of the Bombay progressives, Kekoo Ghandy, is surely the prototype of the novel's Kekoo Moody. *The Moor's Last Sigh* can thus be read as an attempt to correct an omission in India's contemporary cultural history, by imagining a Bombay artist who, unlike those of the Calcutta school but like the city of Bombay itself, embodies a far-reaching spirit of hybridity and religious tolerance. By describing in detail pieces of visual art that the reader can never actually see, and is simultaneously forced to imagine, Rushdie highlights the limitations of his own language. Aurora's elegiac mural for her dead mother is the first work of art to be paid significant attention in the text, and is perhaps the most explicit in its engagement with national themes. As such, I would like to consider this imaginary painting, and Rushdie's description of it, in some detail.

The work, as the reader encounters it, is doubly translated—mediated through verbal language as well as through the consciousness of one of the novel's characters. Having seen Aurora's burgeoning artistic talent through the eyes of her intimate companion, Josy (MLS 45), the reader is now

invited to view the mural from the perspective of the more emotionally distant Camoens:

> Every inch of the wall and even the ceiling of the room pullulated with figures, human and animal, real and imaginary, drawn in a sweeping black line that transformed itself constantly, that filled here and there into huge blocks of colour . . . she had put history on the walls, King Gondophares inviting St Thomas the Apostle to India; and from the North, Emperor Asoka with his Pillars of Law . . . her versions of erotic temple carvings . . . the building of the Taj Mahal . . . the battle of Sritianapatnam.
>
> (MLS 59)

Numerous levels of concern intersect within the work, and Aurora's own family shares the stage with history, geography, myth, architecture, and pure fancy. There are thus several dimensions to the young Aurora's representation of India that must be considered, linked to both the form and content of the work.

Camoens immediately perceives in the mural "the great swarm of being itself" (MLS 59). This remark implicitly constructs a vision of life as multiplicity and simultaneously suggests that this vision can be and is accepted as the norm. The "hyperabundance of imagery" that awes the artist's father ought, by extension, to impress the reader as well (MLS 60). Aurora's work betrays the possession of a "truth" that "scared the words away" from Camoens, leaving him unable to speak (MLS 60). Camoens's silence serves to heighten the effect of the painting; articulation is completely displaced into the visual realm. Implicitly, then, visual art is positioned as the medium best equipped to represent the Indian nation. This nation straddles the real and the imaginary, the past and the present, history and myth. The hybrid, here as well, is synonymous with the unreal "creatures of . . . fancy," anticipating both Uma's and Vasco's vainglorious constructions (MLS 59).

Most potent, perhaps, is Camoens's recognition that the central figure of the piece is Isabella, who is both Mother India and Aurora's own, recently deceased, mother:

> It was all set in a landscape that made Camoens tremble to see it, for it was Mother India herself, Mother India with her garishness and inexhaustible motion, Mother India who loved and betrayed and ate and destroyed and again loved her children . . . who stretched into great mountains like exclamations of the soul and along vast rivers full of mercy and disease, and across harsh drought-ridden plateaux on which men hacked with pickaxes at the

> dry infertile soil; Mother India with her oceans and coco-palms and rice-fields and bullocks at the water-well, her cranes on treetops . . . a protean Mother India who could turn monstrous.
>
> (MLS 60–61)

Mother India in *Midnight's Children* seems to exist only in her monstrous guise—Indira Gandhi appears as a widow (traditionally a cursed figure in Hinduism), witch, and torturer. During the Emergency, the Indian artist M. F. Husain depicted her as "Durga or Kali, the goddess of death and renewal, riding bloodily across India."[72] In contrast, Rushdie's imagined painting in *The Moor's Last Sigh* figures an as-of-yet-unsullied version of Mother India, which, despite foregrounding its potential for misappropriation, nevertheless suggests the possibility that this highly charged metaphorical figure might once again be imagined for the benefit of the nation.

Bharat Mata was probably Abanindranath's most famous work, and any artistic representation of Mother India is now implicitly juxtaposed with it. Whereas *Bharat Mata*" is set against an indefinite backdrop, the Mother India conjured for us by Rushdie is synonymous with a dizzyingly varied and excessive landscape. These geographical attributes encompass the ecology of the entire subcontinent and, in their incorporation of the sea, simultaneously evoke both the bounds and the boundlessness of the nation. The ocean might be the border of India, but it is also the medium through which India encounters the world beyond the subcontinent.

Originally called *Bharat Bangala,* or *Mother Bengal,* the title of Abanindranath's painting was later altered to reflect his growing nationalist consciousness.[73] Yet the fact that Abanindranath could change the painting's title in this way without altering its content suggests an excessive eagerness to confirm Bengal's metonymic status within the subcontinent. In a predominantly illiterate country, art was viewed by the elite as harboring a potential universal language, whose symbolism could provide a nationalist vocabulary to span class and language divides. Whereas Nehru emphasized Mother India as an abstraction of the soil, linking her implicitly to the rural lifestyle led by the majority of his future constituents, Abanindranath, in providing her with a concrete representation, created a specifically Hindu icon. Mother India's multiple arms, a symbolic object in each hand, evoke the conventions of Hindu deities' representation. Though the items she holds suggest a new, more secular creed—that of nationalism—the image certainly constructs a privileged association between Hinduism and an imagined Indian nation.

The painting imagined by Rushdie, however, though it recalls Nehru's figuration of the soil as Bharat Mata, attempts a much larger synthesis.

Aurora's Mother India yokes together not only earth, air, and water, the whole range of geographical extremes, but a whole spectrum of functions. She is the physical setting for the activity of the nation and that activity itself. The invocation of Kali suggests the simultaneity of her creative and destructive power. This "protean" quality, which the text highlights so clearly, suggests an openness and flexibility in India and Indianness lacking in Abanindranath's more minimalistic portrayal, *Bharat Mata*.

The relationship between the viewer and the Mother India figure is also noteworthy. Aurora's landscape, which Camoens understands to be utterly empty of either God or gods, despite the comparison of Mother India with Kali, essentially secularizes the Mother India figure and, by extension, the nation and its citizens (MLS 60). Aurora's status as the child of Isabella (who lends Mother India her face) configures the relationship between mother and child in purely emotional, rather than religious, terms. Unlike Abanindranath's figure, then, this Mother India is not simply an object of devotion. That she can be described as garish suggests she may even possess comic potential.

The language used to describe this early masterpiece echoes that used by nationalist and other art critics. The strong black line and blocks of color evoke the Kalighat bazaar art of Calcutta as well as the medieval painting of Rajasthan. Aurora's colors are too numerous (there are forty shades of green alone) to conform to the aesthetic of either tradition, however. Perhaps such a work could not be realized at all. The sadness of the piece and proximity of death might evoke the work of Abanindranath, who also produced a famous portrait of his mother, but, stylistically, Aurora's work seems to have little in common with the New School. As such, Aurora's work represents a fusion of India's national art traditions, thereby suggesting a particularly radical kind of hybridity, but one that, like the painting itself, may exist purely in the abstract.

Aurora's commitment to naturalism after independence evokes the commitment of Nehru's literary followers to realism, but eventually she recognizes the inadequacy of the realist mode and embraces the "epic-fabulist" (MLS 174).[74] Her early work includes on-the-spot portraits of Bombay's poor and their everyday struggles, which is not only overtly political but, ostensibly, captures "the truth of their lives" (MLS 130–131). Aurora's choice of a lizard as an emblem of her authorship suggests a self-positioning as an unproblematic, objective observer, an "unblinking lizard on the wall of history" (MLS 131–132). The sheer multitude of stories that Aurora tries to tell perhaps necessitates the eventual abandonment of her lizard persona. It is after independence that she begins to question her commitment to realism, anticipating the failure of independence to deliver on Nehru's

promises (MLS 173). Her work from this period is "tortured, unresolved," and yet shows an uneasy interest in Miranda's overtly apolitical flights of fancy and whimsy. Abraham, always first to see Aurora's work, favors realism, while Vasco Miranda, who is consistently the next viewer, inevitably contradicts him entirely. It is only once Aurora has combined these two influences—the real and the fabulous—that she fully realizes her artistic project. Aurora's technique thus closely mirrors Rushdie's own, and the narrative's praise of the painter's authenticity is an implicit validation of the author's own. Indeed, there is a sense that realism itself may be confusing rather than transparent (MLS 175). Literature and the visual arts flow seamlessly into each other, enabling the creation of a discourse that continuously pushes beyond the limits of verbal language.

The Moor's Last Sigh repeatedly stresses the affinity between Aurora's work and a verbal narrative tradition. Her painting *The Scandal* is a "dance . . . not of bodies but of tongues," which communicates a "thousand-and-one anecdotes" (MLS 102). This degree of generic hybridity is possible, at least to an extent, because Aurora's work is inseparable from the critical language in which it is described and has no existence beyond it. Rushdie's treatment of Aurora's work, therefore, highlights the impossibility of objectivity in descriptive language. The varied viewer response to some of the paintings that the novel depicts (such as those to Vasco's portrait of Aurora, and Aurora's "The Kissing of Abbas Ali Baig") simply highlight the elusiveness of the works themselves. The text both sets up the desire to uncover an objective truth and systematically denies any possibility of its fulfillment. The nation can, perhaps, be adequately represented, but only in this indirect, mirrored fashion. Any accessible representation is merely a shadow of that idealized platonic image of nationhood. Hybridity, then, is manifest as untranslatability and indeterminacy.

Central to Aurora's imagined oeuvre are the Moor paintings, particularly the eponymous *The Moor's Last Sigh.* This depiction of mourning and departure is painted between 1977 and 1981, a period soon after the Emergency, which witnessed considerable growth in communalism; the painting coincides with the loss of India's national innocence. *The Moor's Last Sigh* is "harsh" and "stark" (MLS 218). Where the earlier paintings represented a self-conscious attempt at nationalist mythologizing, these later works envisage the destruction of that ideal through communalism (MLS 227). After the Emergency, Bombay's multitudes, as Aurora represents them, exude horror, not life (MLS 235). Everything becomes "distorted" as it is "pulled towards the void." This is the magical-realist mode at its most frightening. The Moor, rather than functioning as a point of synthesis, is "impotent," and the distortion of the landscape evokes an impossible and

insurmountable fragmentation of the physical world (MLS 236). The division between land and sea is "harshly delineated," and the fissure threatens to swallow the people whose, mobility is evidence of their precarious existence rather than a liberated flexibility (MLS 235). Fragmentation is thus represented as a dangerous, and even apocalyptic, manifestation of physical decay and social disjunction. As such, the painting *Moor and Ina's Ghost Look into the Abyss* stands in direct contrast to the earlier Mother India mural.

In Aurora's late painting, fragmentation is therefore opposed to any liberating hybridity, for it creates a world of sharply defined absolutes. As such, its aesthetic contrasts with that of the early nationalists, for whom indeterminacy was a key artistic merit.[75] Abanindranath's washes create moody but indistinct backgrounds, in which only the smallest hint is usually given of the existence of any concrete structures or locations. The New School shied away from work that depicted passion or other overpowering feelings, preferring instead indistinct forms and atmospheric settings. Aurora's early, more deceptive Moor paintings, in which land, water, and sky seem to merge and reflect one another, are similarly allusive and elusive. If indeterminacy was, in fact, key to the survival of Indian identity under colonialism, then it is hardly surprising that it should have emerged as an important aesthetic in the modern period.[76] Indeed, such indeterminacy was necessary to any articulation of the nation as multicultural in order to avoid essentialist representations. If the "Indian consciousness of India" is "essentially and vitally one of cultural imagination," then any truly nationalist art would be positively required to eschew any narrow realism, which might suggest too absolutist a view.[77]

This embracing of indeterminacy, which implicitly positions everything as cultural, does not, I contend, inevitably fall into the error identified by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak of making "everything *merely* cultural," which is a significant danger of cultural relativism; nor does it necessitate, as she suggests, a strategic view of culture as the "residual moving into the dominant as emergent," a model that still centers hierarchy, albeit hierarchy in the process of transition.[78] Instead, indeterminacy could be regarded as a radical form of the syncretic, which Spivak identifies as a key attribute of the multicultural nation. Without an underlying principle of equality, however, syncretism can easily be co-opted as an agent of domination. This is precisely what informs Raman Fielding's construction of India in *The Moor's Last Sigh*—a construction that serves to undermine, rather than uphold, the ideal of tolerance. If all versions of the nation are accepted as equally legitimate, and no authority is definitive, then Nehru's construction of India's unity in diversity cannot be said to be preferable to the BJP's vision of *Ram Raja.*

Though Aurora's early and late Moor paintings may appear to be stylistically opposed, at least at first glance, it is fitting that they form different parts of a single sequence, since the fragmentation depicted in the later work does not contradict the blurring of boundaries in the earlier works but is an extension of it. With this implicit valorization of authenticity, at least on some level, *The Moor's Last Sigh* constructs desirable hybridity, not in opposition to purity but as modulating, perhaps, between discrete cultural sources, without ever entirely destroying or overtaking them. The hybridity advocated thus appears to be "a specific form of the syncretic," "whose premises are *predetermined and are fixed by racial and cultural differences.*"[79]

Zeeny Vakil, who also appears in *The Satanic Verses,* is the mouthpiece for Rushdie's aesthetic within the text, "the voice of a vigilant multiculturalism."[80] Her critical study of Aurora's work, entitled—in a playful nod to Homi Bhabha, among others—*Imperso-Nation and Dis/Semi/Nation: Dialogics of Eclecticism and Interrogations in A.Z.,* makes Aurora's work "immortal," despite its destruction by arson a short time later (MLS 329).[81] Zeeny, a Muslim, is also the voice of authentic Hinduism in the text, appropriating faith for Marxist discourse and wresting it away from fundamentalism (MLS 338). As a critic, she validates eclecticism as both an artistic technique that is peculiarly Indian and as a national cultural value (MLS 52). Thus, she appears to stand for a particular kind of hybridity, one that does not require any easy reconciliation of hybridity and indeterminacy with a politics of recognition. Within *The Satanic Verses* Zeeny is the agent whereby Saladin is reclaimed for India; she aids him in coming to terms with his identity as inescapably Indian.[82] She therefore mobilizes discourses of hybridity and authenticity and lives both at different times. Saladin's error is repeated by Abraham, whose "appalling . . . crime" is "turning his back on mother and tribe" (MLS 341). Choosing the nation, for Rushdie as for Nehru, is ethical and, indeed, essential. Zeeny's death, which occurs in the attack in which most of Aurora's works are also destroyed, is perhaps the most pessimistic moment in the novel (MLS 373).

One of Aurora's last remaining works, a palimpsest painted atop Vasco Miranda's portrait of Aurora, is in Miranda's possession in Spain, and, after the fire, the Moor decides to travel to Benengeli in order to recover it. It is there that the Moor meets Aoi Uë, a Japanese expert in art restoration who travels the globe preserving artistic heritage, a representative of the new global citizen who seems to move unproblematically between cultures. Her willingness and ability to preserve artifacts from diverse world cultures signal her affiliation with a universal humanist culture rather than any national

or religious one and suggests a "potential for restoring the syncretic, harmonious picture."[83] Yet her cultural experiences (as a person of Japanese origin living abroad, for instance) find no place within the novel. Her agelessness only further robs her of specificity. Unlike the assertive Padma, who insists on her own capacity to critique Saleem's narration, Aoi Uë can only recoil from the Moor; her voice never challenges his. Her universality, it seems, has denied her a position of authority from which to speak.

Indeed, her name itself, "a miracle of vowels," suggests perhaps a dangerous limit in communication rather than its facilitation (MLS 423). She is named for a character in the classic eleventh-century Japanese novel, *The Tale of Genji,* by Lady Murasaki Shibiku. The first wife of the novel's title character, a noted writer and philanderer, Aoi is never entirely happy with her marriage, arranged while both she and her husband were still small children.[84] In a novel where love forms a principal theme, the relationship between Aoi and Genji is both conventional and, perhaps, problematic—her death is closely linked to Genji's inappropriate treatment of one of his other partners. In contrast, in *The Moor's Last Sigh,* Aoi herself falls out of love with a philandering husband, not because of his unfaithfulness but because his habits annoy her. The Moor, like Genji in the original tale, bears responsibility for Aoi's death.

Rushdie's appropriation of this character for the space of global culture as radically unromantic and unconventional constitutes a critique of the postmodern celebration of migrancy. Aoi's great difference from her namesake is her ability to choose and her mobility in the global space, yet she comes to much the same fate as her predecessor. Genji's chief virtue in *The Tale of Genji* is his recognition and performance of his social and economic duty toward his sexual partners.[85] Moraes, in contrast, is far less conscientious, and Aoi's liberation as a woman cannot compensate for either the Moor's or Vasco's ethical failures. The capacity for individual choice becomes hollow in the absence of shared values that ensure the scope for living out one's decisions, a problem literalized in the text by Vasco's incarceration of Moraes and Aoi.

It has been argued that Aoi represents a reintroduction of the feminine, compensating for the untimely demise of both Aurora and Uma.[86] Yet she must die in order for the Moor to tell his tale to a larger audience, and seems to leave little of herself behind, a fate that suggests that she represents, at best, a severely diluted version of the feminine that animates Aurora and Uma. The fact that her death coincides with the destruction of Vasco Miranda's portrait of Aurora suggests that both Aurora's multiculturalism and Aoi's near absence of identity are equally doomed.

Whereas *Midnight's Children* feared the imposition of national hegemony and its consequent suppression of various kinds of difference, *The Moor's Last Sigh* appears equally fearful of a chaotic fracturing of the nation. The novel's final view of Bombay, in which the city literally explodes into fragments, can only be read as apocalyptic. Aurora's fall onto the beach, in the midst of her defiant dance, clearly signals the death of the larger ideals for which she stands. Unless the other is truly recognized as other (a move resisted heavily in Western philosophy), all attempts at multiculturalism are superfluous.[87] It is in the process of recognition that equality becomes possible.[88] Furthermore, it may be detrimental to simply privilege the many over the one, as postmodernism advocates, since that too accedes to certain Eurocentric notions of culture and identity. Uma's accidental death, which occurs when she takes the poison she meant to give the Moor, illustrates the urgent need for recognition, even at the risk of essentializing. She is the victim of her own deceptions, unable to distinguish for herself, after the Moor's switch, which pill is safe and which is tainted, and is committed to maintaining the illusion of normality even at the cost of her own life.[89] Her death illustrates clearly the dangers of indeterminacy and the corresponding need to assign things an appropriate and meaningful identity (and thereby distinguish the fatal from the benign). *The Moor's Last Sigh* thus veers away from a politics centered on hybridity and global citizenship toward a politics of recognition and, perhaps paradoxically, back toward a Nehruvian ethos. If the stuffed dog owned first by Aires, and then by Moraes, "incarnates Nehru's proudly hybrid India," then the novel clearly illustrates that Nehru's dream is now lifeless and tattered.[90] Yet, in utterly destroying the myth of the nation, Rushdie demonstrates how profoundly that myth is needed—even if it must, simultaneously, be continuously challenged and deconstructed.

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CHAPTER 4

All in the Family: Nayantara Sahgal's Indian Home

Of all the authors analyzed in this book, Nayantara Sahgal stands, perhaps, in the closest relation to Jawaharlal Nehru. As his niece—the daughter of Nehru's younger sister, Vijayalakshmi Pandit—Sahgal has a personal and deeply felt relationship with the former Prime Minister, and her memoirs, *Prison and Chocolate Cake* (1954) and *From Fear Set Free* (1962), offer a valuable insider's account of the Nehru household during the nationalist struggle, from one of its youngest members.[1] Pandit, who was close to Nehru, was a successful politician and diplomat in her own right, having been, among other things, India's ambassador to the United States and the first woman to chair the U.N. General Assembly.[2] Pandit, like Nehru, also wrote extensively about her experiences and nationalist activities.[3] Any consideration of Nehru's influence on contemporary novelists would thus be woefully incomplete without some examination of Sahgal's work.

Though, in contrast to much of the Nehru family, Sahgal declined to pursue a political career, she is not, as some critics maintain, a mere chronicler of the first family of Indian national politics.[4] Sahgal has been profoundly engaged in national issues through her work as a journalist and cultural critic. Like Nehru, she was the president of Sahitya Akademi, India's national literary academy, a position she resigned in protest against the Emergency declared by her cousin (then Prime Minister) Indira Gandhi.[5] While the primary focus of her early fiction was gender, since the Emergency, Sahgal's fiction has concentrated increasingly on representing national(ist) politics, not at the expense of examining women's issues but as an extension of that concern. Sahgal has famously explained politics as "the use of power. And also the abuse of power," a definition

that radically expands the notion of the political.[6] Though in many ways Sahgal has been her uncle's greatest defender—embracing much of his thought and rebuffing those critics who would brand Nehru arrogant or cold—I contend that she rejects his insistence (albeit contradicted at times) on the division of the spheres and, consequently, his version of secularism. The separation of the spheres, according to Sahgal, simply does not account for recent Indian history: "In our own era the line between public and private has been a continually disappearing one, as vast numbers of people have had to face the traumatic consequences of public events in their private lives."[7] Politics cannot be kept out of the domestic sphere, least of all in India, for the simple reason, if none other, that so much legislation is self-consciously directed at personal relationships. Indeed, Nehru himself advocated the enforcement of religious and social reform, at least in the majority Hindu community, through the apparatus of the state, though the division between public and private spheres is essential to Nehru's understanding of modernization-without-westernization and to the formation of a secular state.[8]

The (Un)Homely Nation

Rich Like Us, first published in 1981, was written during the Emergency and completed in the United States in order to avoid the wrath of her cousin Indira. It tells the story of the interconnecting lives of four women—Rose, Mona, Nishi, and Sonali. Relations among women are at the center of *Rich Like Us;* consequently, women in the novel are "the state in that they reflect and embody its power yet also . . . the site upon which the state confirms its own identity," in addition to being the agents through whom the problems and possibilities of the state are enacted.[9] The family, for Sahgal, is therefore the central figure of the nation and is constructed via affiliation as well as filiation.[10]

Filiation and affiliation can, however, be a source of conflict; as the discussion below will reveal, Sahgal's ideological affiliations and her filiation (particularly with Indira Gandhi) sometimes pulled her in opposing directions. The notion of affiliation privileges (individual) choice; unlike filiation, it is not a wholly compulsory identification. Individual choice, however, occupies a fraught position in Sahgal's thought. India, according to Sahgal, is "a country where race, religion or caste can decide the course of a love affair, where it can take as much raw courage to choose a husband or leave him, as to face the firing squad."[11] Indeed, filiation and affiliation are both particular subjects of anxiety for women.[12]

Sahgal is not the first Indian writer to utilize the family as a metaphor for the nation. M. K. Gandhi, in articulating his vision of a national Indian community characterized by Hindu-Muslim solidarity, frequently resorted to the vocabulary of family and kinship. Gandhi referred to Indians as a joint family and sometimes referred to Muslims as adopted brothers.[13] When this lexicon is adopted in *Rich Like Us,* it is used, ironically, to emphasis the horror, the "fratricide" that was Partition.[14] *Rich Like Us* also offers a new twist on the family paradigm by positing Indian and British subjects as members of the joint family—in this case, not brothers, but wives of a single husband. Sahgal's consideration of the family thus decenters masculine relationships, even as it recognizes patriarchal hegemonies. This model also complicates the Indo-British relationship, moving it beyond the binary of colonizer and colonized. This is consistent with the dedication of the novel, which describes the "Indo-British Experience" as educational for all its "sharers." In describing Indian colonialism in this way, Sahgal reminds us that affiliation, like filiation, may have a compulsive aspect.

In the aftermath of the Emergency, the analogy between national politics and family politics is bound to have a special, and especially sinister, salience. Indira's status as Nehru's daughter had been an important reason for her initial elevation to office by senior members of the Congress party.[15] Her kinship status was also to remain important to her claim to power throughout her political career. Because genetic heritage, unlike claims of wisdom or heroism, cannot easily be refuted, Indira's claim to control was far greater than any of her political competitors, or even, ironically, than her father's had been. During the Emergency, many key governmental functions were carried out from Indira's residence, where policies were formulated by the so-called "kitchen cabinet."[16] The double entendre here is symptomatic of the tension between public and private spaces.

Within *Rich Like Us,* the inseparability of the personal and the political is nowhere more evident than in the character and experiences of Sonali, the novel's only first-person narrator. A civil servant, like her father, Sonali views the trajectory of India's modern political evolution through the lens of her family history and individual heritage. Political questions are framed by her relationship with her father; a deeper understanding is reached by reading old family papers. It is in trying to come to terms with the loss of her father and his legacy to her that Sonali—sitting in her room in the home she shares with Kiran and Neel (her sister and brother-in-law)—begins to engage with India's contemporary political dilemmas.

Homi Bhabha, in "The World and the Home," whose title echoes Rabindranath Tagore's novel of ideas, *The Home and the World* (1915), argues that the terrain of postcoloniality itself is the unhomely,[17] where

> the border between home and world becomes confused; and, uncannily, the private and the public become a part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting.[18]

If the world for Tagore, in his nationalist account, is modernity itself, with all of its possibilities and perils, it is the home, in Sahgal's novel, that hosts the struggles of postcoloniality and postmodernity.[19] Since home (rather than the world) is presumed to be the domain of women, then it should be no surprise that gender issues figure so prominently in considerations of the postcolonial nation.[20] The doubleness Bhabha describes, engendered by the postcolonial condition, finds expression within the domestic space, in a home that is not home. The plight of those who are unhomed but not homeless is at the center of *Rich Like Us;* home, for the novel's women, must be painstakingly and constantly (re)constructed.

Sonali is ambivalent about domesticity; though she defines herself through her choice of career over marriage, she still needs a home that reflects her subjectivity: "I wanted my part of the house to look as different as possible from Kiran and Neel's . . . All I wanted was my own kind of rooms" (RLU 52). Yet, in a shared house, individual desires must always compete with each other, as they did in Sonali's own childhood, during which her father and mother regularly contested the purchase of household goods, emphasizes (RLU 168). Sonali's feelings of uncanniness, which originate in the censorship imposed by the Emergency, follow her home, where the repression continues (RLU 27). Sonali's friends and family have begun to speak in a new language that leads to self-censorship. Her inability to feel at home is a function both of the domestic space she inhabits and of the state of the nation.

Rose is far more self-conscious about the relationship of home to homeland; it is she who "alerts us to various categories of lies, false reports, justification and twisted use of language which the supporters of autocratic structures adhere to."[21] Rose comes to India from Britain in search of an idyllic home very different to the materially and emotionally impoverished house in which she was raised (RLU 63). For her, at least initially,

> the house shelters day-dreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace . . . In the life of a man, the house thrusts aside contingencies, its councils of continuity are unceasing. Without it, man

> would be a dispersed being. It maintains him through the storms of the heavens and through those of life. It is body and soul.[22]

As Joshua Price has shown, however, the home is not a place of easy day-dreaming for the women whose labor produces it. It is only in the life of a *man* that the home can function thus.[23] Rose's imagined paradise, her Cythera, is a private, individual one, but she soon discovers that neither paradise nor privacy is to be her lot. It is only in retrospect that Rose realizes that "the house in Lahore had eventually become home, with its high ceilings, rooms opening onto other rooms and no privacy at all" (RLU 59). Despite the lack of privacy, the house in Lahore is clearly a home divided: Mona and her son, Dev, occupy the ground floor, while Rose restricts herself to the floor above. Yet the two spaces repeatedly impinge upon each other, with the sounds of Mona's religious gatherings mixing with those of Rose's husband Ram's cocktail party, a situation evocative of Bhabha's doubled space (RLU 229).

Ironically, it is not the home, but the public space of the shop that Rose, as the second, non-Indian wife, is able to claim as her own (RLU 98).

> In authentic experience of 'home,' whether a house, a village, a region or a nation, is a central point of existence and individual identity from which you look out on the rest of the world. To build a new house or to settle in a new territory is a fundamental project, equivalent perhaps to a repetition of the founding of the world.[24]

Rose can only begin to transform the house she shares with Ram and his family into a homely place by making a gesture of conciliation to Ram's father in the public sphere—his shop. It is only after Rose and Lalaji become professional colleagues that she acquires the title "bahu" or daughter-in-law—the public acknowledgment of Rose's domestic status creates a private relationship between them that has hitherto been denied (RLU 118). Lalaji's recognition is crucial to Rose's eventual incorporation into the Indian nation; she is no longer identified with the British, the oppressors (RLU 127).

Indeed, the house in Lahore is a staging ground for that nation; Lalaji hosts prayer meetings "made up of people . . . from the bazaar mixing with Lalaji's well-dressed friends, but indistinguishable from Lalaji, since he looked quite scruffy himself in his rumpled *pyjama-kurta*" (RLU 127–128). Ordinarily, the home is where socioeconomic status is encoded, but in this idealized moment of nationalism, affiliation across classes is so strong that, at least for an instant, Lalaji and the less prosperous bazaar workers are

interchangeable.[25] The contraction of the discourse of difference to that of domesticity suggests a return to M. K. Gandhi's ideology and the tolerance it entailed. Recognition, for the Mahatma, was located in the private sphere and originated from the individual's acts of compassion and solidarity toward those others whose difference he could and did recognize. His discussions of tolerance were always built around the personal friendships he shared with individuals such as the Ali brothers, and he eschewed more public measures of recognition such as interdining.[26]

Private and domestic differences, in *Rich Like Us,* are the sources of profound conflict that continuously spill into the public sphere and may manifest themselves even in murder. Conversely, political fortunes either empower or limit characters in their familial lives; it is Dev's affinity with public power that allows him so much impunity at home. Similarly, the home is a forum for those aspiring to power to demonstrate the "right" social and political attitudes. The public and the private thus continually encroach on each other in ways that are potentially oppressive. Every aspect of life is subject to public expectation and scrutiny, particularly for the novel's women.

If the nation, the homeland, is "a terrain of struggle," as Aijaz Ahmad argues, then it should hardly be surprising that its microcosm, the home, is also a site of contest.[27] The overtly rhetorical and overly patriotic tone of the conversation at the dinner where Sonali attempts to obtain legal advice for Rose suggests the impossibility of even private dissent, pointing to the penetration of the family home by the state's disciplinary apparatus. Indeed, this dinner scene is an echo of that at the beginning of the novel, where Neuman seals his business arrangement with Dev, much to Rose's chagrin, over dinner. The nation, like a prison, seems to exist in a state of constant possible surveillance, and it is this very erasure of privacy that prevents the familial injustice of Rose's mistreatment by Dev from being addressed. The language of military engagement is used to describe the development, and cessation, of hostilities between Rose and Mona (RLU 155, for example). When they begin to go on outings together, particularly to religious plays, Rose enters a new phase of her assimilation into the nation as a whole.

Though neither Rose nor Sonali fulfils the role most readily available to them—that of a Hindu wife—each character manifests this deviation in very different ways. Rose actually tries to fulfill the role of a Hindu wife; she is stymied by a number of factors, not least of which is her own ethnicity.[28] Her failure to produce children is merely the symptom, rather than the cause, of this failure. Though she strives for an authentic place within India, throwing herself into the independence movement with far more enthusiasm than her husband, Ram, Rose's political beliefs do not deproblematize her

status in either the public or the private sphere. For a brief period in the 1920s, the transcendence of religious and ethnic difference seems possible, but both before and afterward, Rose can only find grudging acceptance from Indian and European communities. Her friend Minnie, for instance, cannot reconcile Rose's white skin with her nonwhite husband and family (RLU 64), and Ram's father initially rejects her as well (RLU 46). Rose's working-class background means she cannot fit easily into the Raj—or, indeed, into any system of dominant politics—despite being metonymically associated with it by her skin color.

Sonali, on the other hand, occupies a position that, on the surface, appears more normative but is actually more liminal. Joya Uraizee posits Sonali as a representative postcolonial woman, but her self-described "superb insulation" calls that status into question (RLU 29).[29] As an educated, professional woman who refuses marriage, she does defy traditional gender stereotypes, but equally, represents an emerging norm of a modern, upper- and middle-class India. Sonali's father understands his daughter's achievement in distinctly political terms, believing that she and her peers will "Indianize India." (RLU 28) His statement recalls Nehru's ideas about Indianization, but gives them an ironic twist. Sonali's father both utilizes the term in its original sense—in referring to the original desire of elite Indians to advance their careers in the civil service—and invokes Nehru's more complex usage. In suggesting that it is not any particular institution but India itself that is in need of Indianization, he points to the mythical status of an authentic India. This authentic India is also a place where categories, such as civil servant and politician, are immutable—and is a contrast to the reality faced by Sonali in the 1970s in which the two are "hopelessly mixed" (RLU 28).

The notion of Sonali as an agent of Indianization raises the question of her own identity. Sonali's attitude toward her mother's Kashmiri identity is distinctly problematic. Caught between her mother's insistence on the primacy of her Kashmiriness and her father's marginalized Maharashtrian identity, Sonali prefers the latter (RLU 55-57). The choice is far more complex, however, given that Sonali's mother stands not only for Kashmiri identity but for marriage, domesticity, and an entire gendered life-script, which Sonali wishes to reject. In choosing her father, she is choosing personal independence and public service at least as much as an association with Maharashtra.

Of course, in modern India, Sonali, like Sahgal herself, can be, and always is, Indian—a modern national subject who is free to reject other forms of identification, and who embraces the national identity bestowed on her by her mixed parentage, her Bengali name, and her culinary tastes.

This alignment of domesticity with Kashmiriness, however, offers a reversal of Nehru's construction of his own ethnicity and that of the Kashmiris in the novel (such as Ravi, Sonali's old flame) who see themselves as uniquely qualified for public positions (RLU 58). The shared high culture of Muslim and Brahmin Kashmiris, which for Nehru offered an example of tolerance potentially useful to all Indians, becomes, ironically, an excuse for intolerance, and even racism, toward other Indians. The novel further illustrates the limits of the elite shared culture in the friendship of Ram and Zafar Khan. They may be "blood brothers," but this does not prevent the former from moving south after Partition (RLU 72). Male kinship bonds and their language thus ultimately prove too fragile to form a basis for the nation. Zafar initially mourns the creation of Pakistan, but ultimately becomes an agent of its military government (RLU 216). Even as they celebrate their hybridity, then, these characters yearn for purity (RLU 73).

In making the incorporation of elite Indians the index of national self-realization, Sonali's father signals a key flaw in Nehruvian nationalist ideology, which was inclined to privilege elitist, liberal conceptions of the nation. Theresa Hubel argues that *Rich Like Us* is driven by

> Sonali's growing comprehension that the ideals on which she had been tenderly raised—that in a free India all people are equal, have fundamental human rights, and all have access to an unbiased justice system that will ensure these rights—have little basis in the reality of 1970s India.[30]

I would contend, however, that it is not exclusively in the context of the Emergency that Sonali's ideals, as Hubel understands them, are under threat. The armless beggar—fed and sheltered by Rose—along with his wife, have been the victims of terrible atrocities far away, both spatially and temporally, from the orbit of Indira Gandhi's influence (RLU 75). No state apparatus of any kind appears willing or able to protect him from the tyrannies of landlords or the cruelty of poverty, which, to the beggar, appear timeless and immutable (RLU 258).

It is Sonali's original helplessness before such injustices that, perhaps coupled with a feeling of guilt, leads her to absolve responsibility by clinging to the promise of justice inherent in regulation (RLU 167). Though in other areas of her life, particularly private ones, Sonali loathes "regimentation," she is unconscious of the fact that her professional life is dedicated to it (RLU 111). For Sahgal, regimentation is synonymous with global capitalism and the loss of "family, community, tradition . . . the complex network of material, emotional, and spiritual interdependence that goes into the making of a truly human society."[31] As such, it is opposed to any

notion of syncretism. Sonali seems, early on, to yearn for ideological eclecticism, wanting to "keep its possibilities in our heads like grand symphonic harmonies, so that we never fall into somnambulism again," but can also be overwhelmed by the possibility of choice (RLU 112). Sonali's characterization of India as a "mosaic"—invoking the language of contemporary multiculturalism—suggests rigidity and permanence, and a watchful eye that has designed, and maintains, that stasis (RLU 30).

Sonali's commitment to rigidity and order align her with Indira Gandhi's Emergency, despite her private opposition. The banner carried by the schoolchildren in support of Indira Gandhi, reading "[s]he stood between order and chaos," resonates with Rushdie's discussions of purity and hybridity in *Midnight's Children* (RLU 47). The pure, with its easy and absolute categories, evokes order, while hybridity might easily be mistaken for chaos.[32] As with the India-Pakistan border in Rushdie's fiction, Indira Gandhi, in *Rich Like Us,* purports to occupy an impossible position between two opposed, but necessarily continuous, forces. Sonali, however, seems oblivious to the dangers of the rhetoric around her and admits that, though she has participated in such events before, she had never, as an actor, taken the time to observe or analyze them; she resembles Ravi more closely than she realizes. Jasbir Jain asserts that the Emergency divided the nation into two kinds of people: "those who were helpless and those who were ruthless"; but I contend that Sonali complicates this binary opposition.[33]

Sonali's professional experiences demonstrate clearly that Nehru's assertion that the absence of ideology was, in itself, as potentially threatening as any metanarrative was more than justified. Sonali's very lack of ideology allows her to become, almost unconsciously, complicit with the Emergency and thereby implicates her in much she would, upon reflection, find objectionable. She wakes up too late to the realities around her, and only hopes for personal, not public, salvation. It is not until Marcella, Ram's English lover, makes casual mention of the changes expected when the Emergency is over that it even occurs to Sonali to think of the Emergency as temporary, a clear indication of her resignation (RLU 264). Her inability to speak of Rose's death is emblematic, not only of the destruction of the private by the public, but of the completeness of Sonali's isolation and paralysis.

Even the end of the novel, which some critics have read as tentatively hopeful, does not, I would argue, provide much scope for Sonali's recuperation.[34] Sonali's new relationship with Marcella, who offers her a job doing research on Mughal art and history, suggests an uneasy retreat into the simple answers of colonial institutions. This new occupation simply distances her, once again, from her troubled personal relationships and her niggling ideological uncertainties. Given the self-reflexivity of her research

and the fact that Sonali reads for two consecutive weeks without engaging in any human contact, it is far from certain that this new activity represents any progress toward personal or social recuperation. The shared high culture of the Mughal period, which is the object of Sonali's study, was an important source for Nehru's vision of unity in diversity and thus provides a basis for resisting the equation of an Indian with a Hindu. But the novel also makes clear the need to move beyond Nehru's paradigm. Gandhi's thought has a resonance for Sonali; however, the notion that Gandhi might be taken as a new beginning seems to be one she forgets quickly (RLU 112).

Indeed, elsewhere, *Rich Like Us* presents the possibility of using private relationships as the basis for public ideology in the bleakest possible terms. Nishi engages with the public world of politics out of the express desire to protect those nearest to her, particularly her father. It is only in her most inward, private self that we see her capacity for dissent. Nishi's memories of giving birth to her two children (RLU 234) reveal her "silent revolt and her inability to protest the downside of the experience publicly because of the universal glorification of motherhood and perpetuation of the human race."[35] Even as she experiences the agony of labor, her voice is silenced by a doctor who reassures Nishi and her visitors that she is fine. Only Sonali realizes that another person, one whom she does not know at all, lurks behind the façade (RLU 251). For Nishi, the Emergency is just one more source of oppressive silence, a phenomenon that, as a woman, she is already intimately familiar with. For Sahgal, modernity, for women, is specifically aligned with the repudiation of suffering.[36] While Makarand Paranjape takes this to mean that women should assert their individuality and actively protect themselves from suffering, I contend that this is too simplistic a reading, one that threatens to undermine the Sahgal's own understanding of the political. Indeed, one of the significant political aspects of *Rich Like Us* is, as Theresa Hubel has pointed out, its questioning of liberal individualism. Immolation and rebellion are not the clear binary opposites that Paranjape suggests.

Paranjape offers the story of Sonali's great grandmother, who committed sati, as an example of women's mistreatment at the hands of tradition. To read the sati exclusively as a victim, however, further oppresses her by denying her even that severely inscribed agency implied in choosing self-immolation.[37] The fact that this woman's name is not even mentioned in the account of her story is emblematic of the erasure and oppression that is possible in the name of saving Indian women. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has demonstrated the politically charged nature of colonial writing about sati, but Sahgal's account suggests that accounts by Indian men may be just as problematic as those by their white counterparts.[38] Harveen

Sachdeva Mann goes even further, suggesting that Sahgal's use of the sati motif clearly demonstrates Sahgal's commitment to masculinist "hegemonic nationalism."[39]

Elsewhere in the text as well, Sonali's reading of other women erases, rather than documents, their agency. She attributes her lack of interest in marriage to the experience of attending the wedding of an older cousin, Bimmie, as a child. According to the young Sonali, it is "clear" that the older members of the family "knew nothing about Bimmie and had captured and tented her by mistake"; Bimmie walks "as slowly as if she'd grown old" (RLU 54). While it is certainly possible that her cousin was coerced, as Sonali maintains, this cannot be assumed; Bimmie's voice finds no space in this account. As far as Sonali is concerned, Bimmie's story comes to an end with marriage. Sonali's views of marriage and Nishi's adulation of Indira Gandhi, though both ostensibly feminist, are therefore actually self-subverting.

Paranjape's assertion that the novels' endorsement of Nehruvian and Gandhian ideas constitutes a refusal of modernity in favor of tradition, at least in the public sphere of politics, seems to miss the point. Certainly, the novel does not suggest that Sonali's many uncertainties would have best been dealt with by simply submitting to patriarchal conventions. Given that Sahgal eschews this separation between the public and the private, the notion that tradition and modernity could be relegated respectively to one or the other does violence to her work.[40] Rather, she demonstrates the ways in which seemingly opposed categories can be linked together, for better or for worse. Indeed, in negotiating between the languages of Nehru and Gandhi in *Rich Like Us,* Sahgal demonstrates the impossibility of opposing tradition and modernity in any straightforward fashion; both Nehru and Gandhi are inescapably modern, albeit in very different ways.

In a wry observation of contemporary Indian politics, Sahgal notes that today Indians have "got militant Hinduism, two words which since time began could never be linked because they were mutually contradictory."[41] That these two words are now linked (giving the lie to the "never") not only reminds us of the social capacity for contradiction but of the essential violence of the Hindu fundamentalist project. Urgent opposition to such fundamentalism runs throughout Sahgal's work. *Rich Like Us* reminds us, however, that even the process of asserting tolerance is necessarily fraught. All ideologies are capable of becoming dangerously limiting orthodoxies; at the same time a refusal of all ideologies is in itself a kind of fundamentalism. The means of renegotiating a positive relationship between the public and the private, so as to provide content to the nation and make it capable of resisting fundamentalism, is not, however, provided in *Rich Like Us.*

Secularism as Syncretism in *Lesser Breeds*

Sahgal's most recent novel, *Lesser Breeds* (2003), reexamines the nonviolent independence struggle from the points of view of several individuals involved in the nationalist movement. The title derives from Rudyard Kipling's "Recessional," part of which is quoted as an epigraph to the novel, and refers to the non-White peoples whom it was Britain's duty, as the poet saw it, to civilize and rule. Though the novel deals primarily with India's struggles, the phrase "lesser breeds" also appears elsewhere in Sahgal's recent work and is used ironically to refer broadly to non-Western peoples who have continued to be victimized by imperialism[42] and "are not the felicitous subject[s] of the European Enlightenment."[43] As such, the novel also deals with broader themes of racism and discrimination and can be best understood within the context of Sahgal's recent nonfiction.

The first section of the novel, "Company Bagh," is set in the imaginary city of Akbarabad. In it, a young schoolteacher, Nurullah, becomes drawn, almost involuntarily, into the circle of a Nehruvian figure, Nikhil, usually known simply as Bhai (brother), and, at the same time, embarks on a personal reconsideration of such matters as faith, sexuality, and identity during the years 1932 to 1942. The narration is third person but told from Nurullah's perspective. The second part, "An Island Called America," takes place in the United States during Second World War and deals primarily with the experiences of Bhai's daughter, Shãn, as she attends university in America. This section is narrated both from her point of view and from those of the Americans whose lives intersect with hers, such as Leda, her host (whose own personal encounters with cultural difference are also given considerable purchase), and Otto, Shãn's lover. This section stresses the otherness of American culture, as seen from the outside, and reverses the conventional gaze of anthropology (in which the anthropologist is typically a Westerner and his object of inquiry an allegedly more primitive, non-Western society) in order to deconstruct many of the values and assumptions underlying Western culture and its perceived difference from the East. As Sunil Khilnani puts it, "Indians . . . have come to see themselves in mirrors created by the inquisitive energies of the West,"[44] and this novel offers an analogous mirror for a Western audience.

The final and shortest section, "Trade Winds," takes place in Switzerland in 1966, where Nurullah has traveled to meet Eknath, an old friend from his nationalist days and now an Indian ambassador. The two reminisce and discuss politics, particularly trade and the arms race in the postcolonial world, issues that highlight the fact that the threat of imperialism did not end with the attainment of Indian independence. Another voice also

interjects repeatedly into the narrative and appears in each of the three sections—that of Pete Ryder, an American who has made nonviolence the subject of his doctoral dissertation and comes to India in 1968 to interview Nurullah about his experiences. In these intervals, which appear in all three sections of *Lesser Breeds* and are printed in italics, both Pete and Nurullah speak in the first person.

As the narrative structure itself suggests, the text is overtly engaged both in reading political history and in dealing with broad political themes. Here, as in Sahgal's previous books, the political and the personal are closely intertwined, with cultural and ideological encounters often figured as relationships between lovers or family members: the Indian Shān and her German lover Otto, the American Leda and her Japanese lover Kamei, and the southern white American Florence Burns and her African-American lover, Ezra, to name just a few.

There are several points of contact between this novel and Sahgal's earlier work. *Mistaken Identity,* for instance, also deals with the independence struggle and contains a Nehruvian figure, Nikhil, while *Rich Like Us* examines the mutual implication of public events and private relationships during times of political crisis. *Lesser Breeds* chronicles recent Indian history but with a difference: the Nehru figure dies before independence is ever attained, executed by the Raj, who wrongly blame him when his followers despair of the efficacy of nonviolent action and wreck a train to draw attention to their cause. It is his daughter, Shān, who leads the nation to independence, and who, like Nehru, refuses to become a pawn in the neoimperial disputes of the cold war.

The depiction of Nikhil's family is evocative of the mythologization of Sahgal's own family and of the challenges this poses to her as both a writer and an individual in attempting to understand and represent them. Since, as public figures, so many of her relatives are already the subjects of competing representations, contests that they have often helped fuel by publishing their own biographies and autobiographies, Sahgal's depictions of her family are necessarily fraught.[45] Furthermore, Sahgal's perceptions of her uncle Jawaharlal were influenced, from her earliest days, by his public standing. In her memoirs, she recalls being roused from a childhood nap by crowds outside the house, whom her uncle Nehru came out to address:

> listening behind the window, I had a queer sensation. All at once I became one of those anonymous faces outside, gazing with complete belief and affection at the man who stood before them. The little girl who was behind the window was on the wrong side of it. She should have been out in the garden with those others with whom she felt a strange and sudden kinship.[46]

It is thus through Sahgal's attachment to her uncle that she begins to envision herself as part of the nation, an identification that involves blurring the boundaries between her home and the world outside.

As in *Rich Like Us,* the motif of family plays an important role in this novel, and the most meaningful kinship relationships are often actually not those based on ties of blood. Nurullah is prompted to become part of Bhai's household because Bhai's frequent stints in prison mean there are often no able-bodied men to assist in the running of his household. In addition, as Shān's tutor, Nurullah is called upon to supply the guidance and care that a parent would normally provide (her mother, like Indira Gandhi's, passes away while she is yet a child). Nurullah is technically Bhai's secretary, and as a teacher with no family commitments, he is one of only a small number of people in Akbarabad equipped for this role. His ambivalence about the nationalist movement, combined with the magnetism of Bhai, makes it difficult for him to refuse Bhai's request.

Nurullah himself lacks a family in the conventional sense, having been raised, at a distance, by a local zamindar. His paternity is uncertain, since his mother was repeatedly raped by two men, a father and son, and died shortly after childbirth. The result, as I shall consider later, is an untethered sense of self. In each of his adult homes, Nurullah's position is uncertain—in Bhai's house he is sometimes mistaken for a petty servant and, in fact, performs a wide variety of functions.[47] Similarly, in the home of Mrs. Shona Tiwari, where he boards before moving into the "grand house," Nurullah's position is more son or friend than tenant, as indicated by the fact that Mrs. Tiwari leaves him the house in her will. Nor is Nurullah unique in this respect. Shān's parental figures include not only Nurullah and her own father, but Leda and Edgar Knox, her hosts in New York. Similarly, Florence Burns takes on a maternal role with respect to Leda, with the older woman, once again, bequeathing her home to her young protégé.

The nationalist movement produces a new kind of family, in which ideological bonds supplant those of blood; the shared experience of India's subjugation unites the novel's characters. Like the prison cell in *Mistaken Identity,* the experience of colonialism in *Lesser Breeds*

> juxtaposes, then conflates and blurs the boundaries between rich and poor, between North and South Indian, between Indian nationalist, socialist, and the politically apathetic, and between Hindu, Muslim, and agnostic, into the undifferentiated Indian.[48]

Though the Congress leaders may earn kinship appellations from their followers (such as Bhai), the organization of the nationalists could not differ

more from that of the patriarchal family. Instead of centralized or authoritarian decision making, every concern and possible course of action is discussed at length by all concerned—regardless of age, gender, or status—until a consensus is reached (LB 11). Those who attend the meetings are "born free" and express themselves with a confidence Nurullah has never heard before (LB 10).

Indeed, it is the radical newness of the social space Bhai's home offers that is stressed in *Lesser Breeds*. Like the jail cell in *Mistaken Identity,* Bhai's house becomes a microcosm of India, a place where Indians and non-Indians of different religions, classes, and castes mix. So unused to each other's company are many of their party guests that the hosts devise children's parlor games in an attempt to make them at ease. Unsure as to how to interact with one another across the boundaries of established social convention, they need new rules to guide their socialization in the era of nationalism. Joseph, a carpenter who does occasional work for the household, is awkward when offered a glass of juice after making a delivery, but is able to enjoy himself at the party (LB 90). Even when the participants seem unsure of how to play the games in question, they carry on the best they can and seem thoroughly entertained (LB 92). The act of sharing a meal cements their bond.

The children's games put the guests at ease precisely because they harp back to a phase of life when one is less aware of identities based on class, caste, religion, or ethnicity, and therefore not subject to the same codes of behavior. Indeed, childishness is a feature attributed to many of the novel's characters (including Nurullah and Leda). Yet, in Iram Siram Blatchford's words:

> Contrary to popular belief that early childhood is a time of innocence . . . children have learned positive and negative feelings about racial groups from an early age . . . Children as young as three demonstrate an awareness of a racial hierarchy in line with current adult prejudices.[49]

Paul Connolly even goes so far as to argue that "it is the continued popularity of traditional notions of childhood innocence that constitutes the biggest obstacle to the development of a successful and comprehensive multicultural antiracist strategy."[50] As such, the childish innocence of the games played by the nationalists cannot be simplistically assumed. The pastimes engaged in at the party, which include wink murder, musical chairs, and how green are you, evoke the English-influenced upbringing of Bhai and his family, who would have learned these games at convent schools or from European governesses. Those who know the games teach them to

the others, thereby reaffirming the cultural authority of the elites even in matters of childhood. That authority is comically diffused, however, by the inability of many of the most powerful characters, such as the judge, to play along correctly (LB 92). Against the whimsy of the party games, the austerities imposed on the once-grand house in the name of swaraj serve to make the house itself a place of social newness, a space that has quite literally been emptied and awaits the creation of something new within. In the absence of conspicuous consumption, there is much less, at least visually, to distinguish the different social classes. The poverty of lighting in the house (an attempt to economize) contributes, in a literal fashion, to this obscurity (LB 24).

The setting of the first part of *Lesser Breeds,* in addition to resembling Lalaji's house in *Rich Like Us,* appears eerily familiar to a reader aware of recent Indian history, a fact acknowledged by Sahgal herself:

> Akbarabad is Allahabad and the grand house is Anand Bhavan . . . I named the city Akbarabad, as Akbar holds a special place in Indian history. He is one of the few who tried to forge a syncretism among the people in India.[51]

Allahabad and Anand Bhavan are, of course, Nehru's native city and his family home, respectively; the fact that the India of *Lesser Breeds* is also Nehru's is therefore something Sahgal explicitly acknowledges. Sahgal's admiration for Akbar as a consensus builder is something she shares with Nehru—Akbar is at the center of the history of unity in diversity in *The Discovery of India*—and to imagine Akbar's city as the site of Nehru's national struggle reinforces not only the centrality of Nehru's activities to the novel's account of Indian nationalism but an accession to his ideals as well.[52] Akbarabad is a place untouched by violence at the time of Partition, where a lived experience of hybridity and accommodation dictates everyday relationships among those of different ethnicities and faiths, and "the multiple experience of the self obliges us to abandon any static view of identity."[53]

Sahgal's emphasis on syncretism in the passage quoted above demonstrates both her debt to, and her difference from, Nehru. *Lesser Breeds* is a text that, like *The Discovery of India,* celebrates miscegenation and shifting, uncertain identities. Nurullah never questions the "wisdom of mixing races and bastardizing blood," and instead feels relieved that "we of Hindustan are blended and bastardized beyond unravelling" (LB 165). Lily Hulbert, Nurullah's sweetheart, has pretences of Englishness and marries an English soldier before becoming a Bollywood star, at which point it is believed that she is a "mixture of Iranian and Hungarian." The only certainty that the

text provides about her heritage—in a clearly ironic move—is that, whatever the genetic combination, it is "pure Akbarabad" (LB 355). Lily's eventual identification with India, as a Bollywood star, also requires a certain degree of willful self-construction, a process the text clearly endorses. Such self-constructions are implicitly contrasted with the "hankering for more identity," which is aligned with a quest for purity and inevitably unleashes destruction, including the genocides of both the Second World War and the Partition (LB 160).

Indeed, "a symbiotic relation between country of origin and individual identity . . . can only be secured when everyone remains in place, at "home," through the generations," a condition that is neither attainable nor desirable in *Lesser Breeds*.[54] Lily's comic references to "home," a place she has never seen, demonstrate the pervasiveness, and even the naturalness, of the unhomed condition Homi Bhabha describes in "The World and the Home" (LB 159, for example).[55] Nationalism serves to radically rewrite the space of the home, and the modernity and integrity of the homeland is inexorably linked with the possibility, and even the probability, of the movement of its citizens.

When Nurullah comes to New York in 1948, his American host declares that India is almost impossibly "*complicated*"; she finds "it hard to figure out if it was Hindoo or Moslem, capitalist or communist." Nurullah agrees: "Even I, an Indian, can't figure out which of those I am . . . or whether I'm all of them" (LB 349). His self-definition, then, maps on to that of the nation. Nurullah's personal confusion may be explained by his particularly eclectic childhood experiences:

> The boy knelt on a prayer mat facing Mecca to do Namaz five times a day and studied the Koran. But racing with other children and barking pi-dogs behind the peasant columns passing through to join a fifty-mile march to Akbarabad he shouted *Sitaram* with all the rest. He squirted colours at Holi, whirled firecrackers at Diwali, and fasted during Ramzan. He played hide-and-seek in the big house forgetting he was a servant and slept in the servant's quarter dreaming a master's dream. In truth he did not know if he was Hindu or Muslim, lord or vassal. All that mattered was he could read and write.
> (LB 50)

As a child, Nurullah finds himself at the crossroads of several identities. His biological parents are Dalits, and his guardian gives him "the refuge of Islam" so that he might be spared the hardship of being an outcaste (LB 50). In terms of class, Nurullah's situation is also ambivalent; his difference from the zamindar's family is maintained, yet he enjoys many of the privileges of that

family, receiving a comparable education, even if he sits at a separate desk. His plight and "master's dream" are emblematic of the conditions of colonial India and the desire for swaraj they engendered.

Nurullah's Indianness is perhaps the only thing about which he has no doubts; certainly, his views on politics, love, and virtually all other subjects are a source of insecurity for him. The content of this Indianness is a matter of uncertainty, but not of unease. It is only to the outsider, the American, that this imprecision seems threatening. Significantly, Nurullah's ability to live with contradiction and his rejection of the binary terms of engagement offered by his American interlocutor mark both his similarity to and his difference from Nehru. Nehru's concept of unity in diversity embraces the possibility of an elusive yet unassailable Indianness, but still attempts to work within the terms—Hindu, Muslim, capitalist, communist, and so forth—laid out by Western discourse. It is only within the context of the newly emerged modern Indian nation that Nurullah's identity—marked by ambiguities of religion, region and caste-based identities—can be articulated.

Indeed, as the characterization of Akbarabad quoted earlier indicates, Sahgal's reading of Akbar as a national figure differs subtly but significantly from that of her uncle. While Nehru emphasizes Akbar's capacity to synthesize a united India, to create "one state" that became "organically fused into one people," Sahgal sees Akbar's India as a place of syncretism (DI 259). Though syncretism does imply unification, unlike fusion (which draws its meaning from the field of physics), it does not suggest that the parts most lose their individuality or their discrete characteristics in order to become part of the whole. In its connotations of reconciliation and harmonization of diverse, and even contradictory, practices, syncretism seems to point toward a certain preservation of difference rather than its elimination.

Syncretism as a strategy for multiculturalism also has its origins in indigenous Indian traditions of thought and belief, making it a particularly appropriate way of approaching the diversity of the modern Indian nation. Brian A. Hatcher argues that, despite the Western view of syncretism as indicative of a dilution of an idealized and originally pure tradition, Hindu thinkers have freely practiced eclecticism in both ancient and modern times.[56] Eclecticism is a mode of thought particularly appropriate to Hinduism, since it lacks a central canonical text and has no single source of religious authority. As such, it has always been characterized by the multiplicity of its theological and practical manifestations. Eclecticism connotes inclusivism and acknowledges that all realities are constructed.[57]

While Hatcher prefers the term eclecticism to syncretism in characterizing a willingness to draw on diverse, and even contradictory, sources, since the latter implies a certain organizing logic in the choice of elements, it is

this precise feature that makes syncretism particularly useful in conceptualizing Indian multiculturalism. Gandhi, whom Hatcher describes as a practitioner of eclecticism,[58] might, I contend, be better described as a practitioner of syncretism, as all of his borrowings are informed by a sense of "what is really just and good."[59] Since eclecticism can involve "enhancing connections among things hitherto never connected," it leaves itself open for appropriation by intolerant political discourses.[60] Indeed, Hatcher's description of eclectic practice by modern Hindu apologists bears an uncanny resemblance to Sahgal's remarks on Hindu fundamentalism as the connection of two things—Hinduism and fundamentalism—that "could never be linked because they were mutually contradictory."[61] Multiplicity without an overarching ideal of tolerance may, paradoxically, embrace exclusivism in the name of inclusivism. Syncretism, then, also involves drawing on diverse sources, but acknowledges the need to harmonize its selections in order to avoid subverting its own logic of eclecticism. As such, a syncretic vision of unity is particularly sensitive to the possibility of difference within the nation and to the inevitable disjunctions and discontinuities of the heterogeneous national community. At the same time, it also values social harmony and cohesion. In *Lesser Breeds,* Nurullah's willingness to belong to any, or all, of the religious and political categories offered to him, while insisting unequivocally on his national identity, exemplifies the syncretic quality of Sahgal's Indianness.

As an ideal, syncretism also has definite aesthetic connotations; a syncretic fusion produces only a general and inexact "impression," and, in consequence, a syncretic subject would seem to demand imprecise or elusive representation. As such, Nehru's attempts to define the nation in *The Discovery of India* are inevitably in tension with his attempts to represent its unity in diversity. The aesthetic of *Lesser Breeds,* and in particular its narrative structure, is thus inextricably linked with its politics. The interjection of Pete's voice, which is in no way foregrounded, and the several sudden shifts in perspective, location, and period serve to create just this sense of unity in diversity. Sahgal's narrative technique in *Lesser Breeds* enacts her multicultural politics.

Sahgal's reliance on impressionistic representation is most evident in her focus on cross-cultural encounters and the divergent perceptions that such moments necessarily engender. "An Island Called America," much like Nehru's *The Discovery of India,* draws on the conventions of travel writing and ethnography but subverts them to comic effect. Shān keeps a journal of her experiences in the United States, studiously noting down her American hosts' beliefs and behavior, most of which she finds absurd. The other girls who attend her college and share her dormitory are the

subject of particular scrutiny. Janey Ann Lawrence, ostensibly Shãn's best friend—whom Shãn goes so far as to assist in obtaining an illegal abortion—is also the Indian girl's principal object of inquiry. She similarly scrutinizes Otto, an older German man with whom she has her first sexual encounter (an experience she has been prepared for by her informant Janey).

Shãn also examines and exoticizes American modes of dress, courtship, and social conventions. Her presumption of her own objectivity and the fact that her writings serve to reinforce, rather than challenge, her identification with her country of origin align Shãn's account with the travel writing of high empire, while at the same time subverting its authority.[62] As the final stage of her education, and her first trip outside India, which encompasses her first sexual experience, Shãn's studies in America have all the hallmarks of a rite of passage, which is the formal basis of the travel genre.[63] In place of desire for the other (usually the prerogative of the traveler), however, Shãn feels repulsion, or, at best, indifference. Americans, to her, are not the liberated creatures they perceive themselves to be, but are enslaved to the forces of capitalism and convention as well as inhibited by their own limited vision (LB 284). In particular, Shãn sees the West as a place of gender oppression (LB 281) compared with India, in a clear reversal of the Orientalist stereotype held by her college teachers (LB 271).

Leda, a translator and Shãn's host, attempts to have the diaries that record Shãn's experiences published, but Leda's colleagues at the publishing house seem less than enthused and decline the offer. In attempting to publish the journal in America rather than in India, Leda tries to undermine the function of conventional travel and ethnographic accounts. Rather than act as a native informant by making America available to her fellow Indians—which is Shãn's original intention—Leda hopes that her guest's diary, if published in the United States, will enable Americans to view themselves with more honesty, by challenging prevailing ideologies about the East and the West. In traditional ethnography, according to Spivak,

> [t]he native informant, although denied autobiography . . . is taken with utmost seriousness. He . . . *is* a blank, though generative of a text of cultural identity that only the West . . . could inscribe.[64]

If the contemporary native informant seeks, as Spivak maintains, to profit from their apparent authority to represent the "other" culture, the opposite

is true in *Lesser Breeds.*[65] Leda is not upset, however, when the manuscript is turned down because she has learned that the West does not want to read such stories (LB 336).

The inability to view one's own culture critically is necessarily linked to the stereotyping of others. It is only with social freedom that the recognition of the other's individuality becomes possible. The colonizers who exploit his land initially have no reality for Nurullah; the white people of Akbarabad are, to him, all the same (a view of the British colonizers also expressed in *Mistaken Identity*). The Raj's brutality, for Sahgal, as for Nehru, is evidence of European exceptionalism in the Indian context—though Sahgal does not use the term, *Lesser Breeds* confirms that all of the other peoples who have found their way to the subcontinent over the centuries have become Indianized: "Everyone surrendered to the spell of Hindustan. Except the Europeans" (LB 61). Gandhi, too, thought that Europeans could remain in India if they became "Indianised."[66] Europeanness is thus only defined in a negative sense: Nurullah muses on the failure of the British to assimilate into India when Shān tells Nurullah that she "had never heard of a European" and asks what "it" is (LB 60). The tutor is relieved when his student runs off before he has the opportunity of answering her question.

Nurullah changes his mind, however, as soon as he is given the opportunity to know the bank manager, Mr. McCracken, more intimately.[67] When Nurullah witnesses the unnamed *Angrez* being attacked by a dog, he instantly sympathizes with the man's need and suffering (LB 63). A complementary feeling of indebtedness leads Mr. McCracken to acknowledge his rescuer the next day at the bank, albeit in a tentative and dismissive way (LB 66). These events allow both men to recognize the humanity inherent in the other; only then can Nurullah begin to move beyond a Manichean interpretation of history and adequately explain to Shān European activities on the subcontinent (LB 81).

Indeed, cross-cultural interactions in *Lesser Breeds* can be transformative in the best possible sense, for both parties, but can also be highly dangerous. Leda's early encounters with difference, in particular her college friendship with Luke, an African American, serve to open her eyes to the realities of both prejudice and cultural difference in a manner that permanently alienates her from the American establishment. As a result, she withdraws into the world of fairy tale, becoming a translator in order to bring the world's stories into the United States. Leda's brother's life is also changed by his encounter with cultural otherness. Edgar devotes his life to traveling the globe in order to bring the plight of the world's colonized people to America's attention and,

simultaneously, trying to influence the attitudes of those in power. While Spivak is deeply suspicious of the accounts of native informants, Sahgal's text clearly endorses Edgar's representation of Indian and other postcolonial nationalisms to those at the imperial center; he is self-aware and does everything possible "to penetrate the colonial curtain" (LB 169).

Edgar is regarded by his countrymen as a dangerous renegade. Despite his advantages of race, class, and education, those in power consistently fail to offer him a sympathetic ear. To the United States government, Edgar's advocacy of non-American causes comes to embody a nameless threat and, as a result, "they virtually disappear him" (LB 343). In one of the inquisitions that have come to typify the McCarthy years, Sahgal's imagined United States Congress labels Edgar a communist, a representation of all that they most fear: the ultimate challenge to the ideology of global capitalism. In his case, to be an informant is not to objectify one's own experiences for personal and professional gain, as Spivak describes it, but to risk one's very life.

When Nurullah is asked by Pete to characterize Edgar, he describes him as a "*lover of mankind. And of jazz*" (LB 348). No recognizable ideological position can adequately define the trajectory of Edgar's political and literary activities nor encompass the scope of his moral and cultural concerns; he is a syncretist in the true sense. Jazz music, with its spirals, its loops, and its unscripted performances, offers another means of imagining, and performing, syncretism.[68] Jazz represents "protest and resistance to national oppression," but, at the same time, is unmistakably *American* music, a national form, which is nonetheless linked to the emergence of twentieth-century global capitalism.[69] Its birth, too, was inextricably linked to the process of urbanization and the processes of cultural exchange and cross-fertilization of different genres, styles, and traditions that occurred both among different African-American communities and between African Americans and the many other peoples who form a part of the urban landscape in the United States. Edgar's love of jazz, then, reinforces his position as a devotee of syncretism and cultural exchange.

Edgar, like Pete, whose inquiry frames *Lesser Breeds,* is committed to nonviolence. Though Pete seems to simply want Nurullah to confirm his faith in the efficacy and moral force of civil disobedience, he actually provides the occasion for Nurullah to articulate his uncertainties about nonviolence, doubts that have not been assuaged even after independence has been achieved. It is Nurullah's voice, not Pete's, that is privileged. Though his story is told for the most part in the third person, the final section is narrated by Nurullah in the first person, as he watches the researcher leave, his allotted hour having elapsed (LB 369). Despite the fact that Pete is

"*remarkably equable,*" the text refuses the authority of his Western, academic perspective (LB 369).

Nonviolence, which underpins Edgar's radical politics, is another of the novel's dominant themes. Yet there is a lack of vocabulary for adequately articulating *ahimsa*, an indication that it, too, may be syncretic and compatible with the imagining of the nation as multicultural. Indeed, all understandings of pluralism incorporate the necessity of avoiding violence, which inevitably threatens the liberties of others.[70] Yet, countering violence, which Nurullah vividly comprehends, with nonviolence seems almost akin to passivism; the term itself suggests a negation rather than a positive act. Nor does watching inaction make things easier; trying to reconcile the mythologized status of heroic acts of nationalist activism with the quotidian existence of the activists themselves seems a difficult task. When Nurullah first encounters Bhai, he cannot believe that someone who has undergone such suffering—having witnessed the death of his father as a teenager—can be a mere mortal (LB 9).

Yet, once Nurullah begins to understand the subversive potential of nonviolence, he finds tools everywhere he goes. Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* enables him to explain the perniciousness of ideology to Shãn (LB 123). Instead of being a tool of colonial subjugation, which the study of English literature was originally intended as, the canon seems to instigate revolt at every turn, such that Nurullah almost begins to wonder how one can teach literature without risking treason.[71] English literature merges so completely with the needs of Indian nationalism that Nurullah conceives of a "Gandhi-Shelley" (LB 140).

The novel's emphasis on nonviolence (also echoed in Sahgal's recent journalistic writings and interviews) marks a turn to a more Gandhian ideology. Though Nehru accepted nonviolence as the correct strategy for India, given the circumstances under which the Congress was working, he did not hold to it as a moral ideal to the same extent as Gandhi (DI 442–443). Since Nehru's time, India has moved even further from the ideal of nonviolence; though the final section of *Lesser Breeds* depicts Indian diplomats arguing for disarmament, India, now, as Sahgal is only too aware, is one of the world's nuclear powers, having conducted its first nuclear test in 1974, thereby joining the ranks of nations that have prioritized their ability to destroy the citizens of other countries over the need to feed its own.[72]

Despite the critique of secularism and the direction that the Indian nation has taken, Sahgal does reiterate the centrality of the nation at the end of the novel. When Nurullah meets Leda and tells her about Akbarabad and his involvement in the independence movement, he summons

"an eloquence . . . that no other subject brought forth" and reveals to Leda a "bursting fullness of heart and mind" (LB 353). After this, Leda no longer has any thought of trying to draw Nurullah away from his home, his "India Beata" (LB 355). Beata is a name that originates in Latin and means "one who brings joy." "India Beata," in the work of Kalidasa, is the destined paradise in which true lovers meet (LB 59). Leda's linking of it with India produces a seamless fusion of the East and the West. In this instance, India does become knowable to Leda, through the emotions it evokes for Nurullah, without becoming an object of Orientalist inquiry. The love Leda feels for Nurullah allows her to transcend that binary relation and escape from the discourse of power. As in *Rich Like Us* and *Mistaken Identity,* love between two individuals in *Lesser Breeds* offers the opportunity to cross cultural boundaries in innovative and nonhierarchical ways.

This mention of "India Beata" is perhaps the only moment of optimism for the nation at the close of the novel. The final section of the novel, "Trade Wind," focuses, as I have noted, on the world of international diplomacy, a realm in which, ideally, nonviolence takes primacy over acts of war, but in reality negotiation may be just one more means of imperial(ist) persuasion and, hence, exploitation. The last paragraph finds Nurullah alone, staring into a mirror and contemplating a brutish future, the "*roughest chapter of trade*" inaugurated by a mysterious "*plane crash in the alps*" that had occurred years earlier during his visit with Eknath in Switzerland (LB 369). This cryptic sentence may be a reference to the Air India flight that crashed into Mont Blanc on January 24, 1966, the day Indira Gandhi was sworn in as Prime Minister: in Nurullah's dream, it does seem that the crash occurs near Christmas. Alternatively, Sahgal may be broadly referring to the inauguration of aircraft hijacking and bombing as a major form of political protest during the late 1960s. The practice of killing or holding for ransom random collections of civilians in order to achieve political power is an anathema to Gandhian (nonviolent) social protest. Yet the march of global capitalism seems to have left a grotesque parody of the imperialist project and its violence—as embodied in Nurullah's snarling, haggard appearance and brutish "gangsterspeak"—as the only available response (LB 369).

At the same time, it was almost inevitable that the rise in incidents of hijacking would precipitate a militant response from the West rather than provoke attempts at cultural understanding. Indeed, it is not disruption within India that seems to pose the greatest threat to the nation at the end of the novel, but the ongoing failure of Western nations to embrace syncretism as India has. The West is as baffled by India in 1966, when Eknath

is an Indian ambassador, as in 1947, when Nurullah attempts to explain the birth of the new nation to his American acquaintances:

> What is an Indian . . . A specimen to gawk at, not a normal chap who joins military pacts and lets his markets get flooded with advanced tomato ketchup. We don't have jolly golfing Generals heading our governments and Colonels overthrowing them with coups . . . we're not even a theocracy. Rank outsiders is what we are, unlovable as halitosis. But do the world's rulers pat our little bottoms and say Never mind if you're god-awful freaks, at least you've got democracy? Not at all. Every few years their think-tanks predict we're about to fall apart. It's so affronting when we don't. Hell hath no fury like a think tank scorned.
>
> (LB 362)

No longer is British exceptionalism the pressing political dilemma for Indians; rather, it is Indian exceptionalism in a world now dominated by global capitalism. Eknath, as a diplomat, is forced to continuously repeat his explanation of Indian policies and realities to every dignitary he meets, reclaiming the role of the native informant for the (postcolonial) nation, telling those in power precisely what they do not want to hear.

Americans, in *Lesser Breeds,* want a translation of India that "can simplify all that confusion of religions and languages"—that, to them, would constitute a "great story" (LB 269). Those whose translations are successful are not the idealists, or romantics, like Edgar or Leda, but lobbyists, the agents of global capitalism, who (like Neuman in *Rich Like Us*) are themselves homeless and emotionally distant. The principal crisis of narrative today, according to Spivak, is that "of producing plausible stories so business can go on as usual."[73] It is because business as usual is constituted through violence that nonviolence produces such a profound critique of imperial projects. It is global capitalism, after all, that must bear at least part of the responsibility for the rise of fundamentalist politics in postcolonial countries such as India.[74]

What India needs, Sahgal seems to be suggesting, is not a radical redefinition of Indianness, but the courage to maintain its syncretism—and hence its exceptionalism—in the face of global capitalism. Hindu fundamentalism, though ostensibly committed to the Indian nation as such, has actually embraced global capitalism via its acceptance of privatization and the dismantling of public corporations and protectionist policies that were instigated by Nehru and continued by Indira Gandhi. It is no accident that India's decision to accede to pressure from the World

Bank and other Western/international organizations and implement economic reforms has been accompanied by a new militancy. The struggle for recognition by minorities within the nation is thus inseparable from the nation's attempt to resist, via state mechanisms, the global culture of violence and economic imperialism. This violence can be effectively countered, not by indulging in more violence (whether directed at international opponents or displaced onto the dispossessed and disempowered subjects within the nation's boundaries), but by refusing the terms of engagement, just as Nurullah does when attempting/refusing to explain India to his American audience.

CHAPTER 5

Reexamining Indian Nonalignment: Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

Arundhati Roy exploded onto the global literary scene in 1997 with her Booker-prize-winning novel, *The God of Small Things.* Hailed both as a stylistic successor to the magical realism of Salman Rushdie and as a novel that broke new ground with its refusal of national allegory and its use of a child narrator, *The God of Small Things* seemed to herald the birth of another literary celebrity. Since 1997, Roy has turned completely away from the writing of fiction and established herself as an activist, speaker, and essayist, distancing herself from the literary celebration and spectacle that accompanied the success of *The God of Small Things,* fortuitously published in the year of India's fiftieth anniversary celebrations.[1] In the process she has garnered both praise—including the 2002 Lannan Foundation Prize for Cultural Freedom[2]—and censure, most notably in the form of her arrest in India.[3]

In this chapter, I wish to consider how Roy has incorporated, often implicitly, the discourse of nonalignment, and its conflicted position between nationalism and internationalism, into her antiglobalization writings. For Roy, globalization is essentially a corporate endeavor that goes hand in hand with religious fundamentalism and a parochial nationalism. Her rejection of globalization is, I will argue, beset with contradictions, a fact that is perhaps inevitable given the disparate and even opposing ways in which the term is understood and employed across communities and disciplines. At the same time, I want to challenge dominant readings of Roy's nonfiction as essentially anti-Nehruvian and antinationalistic, as articulated both in the numerous volumes of nonfiction that she has authored and in her celebrated novel.

From Bandung to the Twin Towers and Beyond

While the origins of nonalignment are not universally agreed upon, all accounts of the movement and its philosophy give a central place to the Bandung conference, a meeting of twenty-nine African and Asian countries held in Bandung, Indonesia, in 1955. Some, like India, were newly independent; others were still fighting for decolonization. The delegates agreed to join together to fight imperialism in all its forms and to resist cold war politics, a decision that eventually led to the official founding of the nonalignment movement in 1961.

The five principles adopted by the delegates to the Bandung conference were:

1. Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty
2. Mutual nonaggression
3. Mutual noninterference in domestic affairs
4. Equality and mutual benefit
5. Peaceful coexistence[4]

It is worth noting that the first four of these principles were already included in the United Nations Charter and had also been part of the charter of the earlier League of Nations. This list of five principles was first used in an Agreement on Trade and Communications signed by China and India in 1954 and seems to have originated with the Chinese leader Zhou En Lai. Nehru was the first to use the term "nonalignment" to describe these principles during a summit in Colombo, Sri Lanka, that same year. Later, the nonalignment movement was to adopt a more detailed list of ten principles, but the core philosophy was to remain essentially the same. The principles of the movement have also been summarized as five "Ds": decolonization, disarmament, development, détente, and dissemination.

Nehru was to be one of the movement's primary leaders and spokespersons. Though his major writings predate both the term nonalignment and the movement, the principles that underlie the movement are already evident in his early thought. His belief that large blocks of nations working together would one day be the rule was radical at the time and counter to the tide of nationalist sentiments sweeping the globe.[5] Nehru's hope that an independent India might pursue a distinctive foreign policy was part and parcel of his conception of Indian identity, a fact well understood by Indian writers of the last fifty years. As Parmanand Srivastava notes, "a term like 'Non-Alignment' was not merely a political slogan to Nehru, but a question of self-identity."[6] Like the other African and Asian leaders who

were present at Bandung, Nehru had already devoted much of his life to working for decolonization. In 1944, at the time when *The Discovery of India* was being completed, Nehru recognized that to be truly independent, India would need to pursue a distinctive foreign policy—resisting both U.S. and Soviet interests, which he felt were essentially imperialistic—and to cooperate with other postcolonial nations in order to strengthen the possibility of resistance. This understanding of global power dynamics was to underpin both the Bandung conference and the subsequent nonalignment movement.

While the nonalignment movement achieved some political prominence during the 1960s and 1970s, conflict between member states has been an ongoing problem, and the movement has struggled to redefine its role in light of the Soviet Union's collapse. Since it saw itself located strategically between capitalism and communism, as well as between the two major superpowers, the erasure of one of these elements from the equation might appear to make nonalignment strategically irrelevant. However, nonalignment did not necessarily ever function in this straightforward way. As such, assertions of its irrelevance may be premature.[7] While the fact that several of the movement's members (including India) have developed their own nuclear programs and/or been at war with other member nations—effectively making a mockery of commitments to both nonaggression and disarmament—is certainly problematic, it does not make either the concept or the movement irrelevant.[8] Indeed, the movement itself still exists, with summits held regularly during the 1980s and 1990s, and most recently during September 2006 in Havana, Cuba. The movement has claimed some success in helping to end apartheid in South Africa and in advancing the cause of Palestinians. The nonalignment movement now hopes to reform the working of the United Nations.

In the wake of the September 11 attacks and the war on terror, there is arguably an even greater need to be attentive to the problems faced by so-called developing nations, since shortsighted foreign policy and a failure to attend to development issues may foster the conditions conducive to the emergence of terror organizations. It is worth noting that in the soul-searching that, in some quarters, followed the 9/11 attacks, the neglect of the very issues that the nonalignment movement has helped bring to the fore, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, were seen as possible seeds of international anti-American sentiment and of the desperation necessary to carry out suicide attacks.[9] As Leo Mates stated in response to the question of nonalignment's future, "[a]s long as there are less developed countries on one side and developed countries on the other, there will be common denominators on both sides."[10]

Though ostensibly a deconstructive gesture that queried the binary opposition of communism and capitalism, nonalignment, as practiced by India,

also posited a dialectic of its own between the United States and the rest. According to Baldev Raj Nayar and T. V. Paul,

> While India's challenge was addressed to both superpowers, in effect it was meaningful largely in relation to the US . . . The world immediately after the war was essentially a unipolar system, with the US as the hegemonic power.[11]

Nehru understood correctly that U.S. hegemony was being advanced as the successor to British hegemony in Asia and that America was embarking on what Drew Middleton described as "an unprecedented expansion of power and influence on a global scale."[12] There are several key words here. Middleton's understanding of the cold war extends beyond the notion of ideological systems, economic systems, and the stockpiling of weapons. Of course, we now have a term specifying the formation and exercise of such global power: globalization. Whereas British imperialism understood itself as having distinctive boundaries (after all, its most famous emblem was the sharply drawn map in which the empire was shaded pink), the new exercise of power entailed no such distinctive boundaries.

No wonder then that now, in the twenty-first century, Nayar's, Paul's, and Middleton's words still seem apt. They also seemed so in the late twentieth century (when Roy first arrived on the world stage). Indeed, the push for global power and influence is arguably echoed in the current battle for "hearts and minds." Alexander T. J. Lennon, for instance, advocates the use of "soft power" (as an alternative to military might) in order to help the United States obtain the widest possible influence and thereby win the war on terror. This vision of the war on terror conceptualizes the world as a global system in which, in order to win, the United States cannot restrict its focus to any particular country or geographical region, regardless of whether a given region could be overtly linked to an imminent terrorist threat.[13] Even American thinkers such as Joel Krieger routinely and casually identify globalization with American hegemony.[14] Such hegemony cannot, by definition, be wholeheartedly welcomed by other nations whose interests will invariably conflict on certain points with those of America. While a complete analysis of the economic and political relationship between America and its others is beyond the scope of this book, it is a truism that self-interest always figures importantly in the foreign policy of individual nations. This being the case, globalization necessarily produces uneven benefits in a world already afflicted with severe inequalities in the distribution of wealth and resources. The resulting opposition

to globalization should not be confused with a simplistic anti-Americanism or support for terrorism.

This is especially true of India, which, despite being democratic, a recent beneficiary (in some respects) of market reforms, and itself very much concerned with terrorism and religiously motivated violence, occupies an ambivalent place in the emerging global order. South Asia is perceived by Robert Kaplan as the place where globalization could collapse—a place he dubs in an article in the *Atlantic Monthly* "The Lawless Frontier."[15] With its large population, India, along with China, may possess the socioeconomic weight to challenge American hegemony, especially should other factors—of which there are potentially legion—affect the global balance of power. Furthermore, as the location of Afghanistan, which has so far proven resistant to American attempts at introducing Western-style democracy and capitalist economics, this region of Asia has recently presented itself as the site of particular anxiety. South Asian thinkers such as Roy tap into such concerns in order to draw attention to other, often ignored aspects of life on the subcontinent—such as poverty and environmental destruction.

Arundhati Roy on Globalization

Roy's best known political statement, in her first extended work of nonfiction prose, *The Cost of Living* (1999), suggests that the time has come to distance ourselves from the Nehru versus Gandhi debate in Indian politics. Both were idealists, according to Roy, and thus champions of the big. And Roy, as the title of her Booker-winning novel makes clear, sees herself as a champion of the small. The story she wants to tell in *The Cost of Living* is not of a nation, or so she says, but of a valley, Narmada, and its opposition to the combined forces of globalization, capitalism, and state oppression, which have manifest themselves as a misguided, environmentally and socially damaging dam project.

Her position is not, however, the simplistic rejection of the past that it might seem. While it is often quoted, this declaration is often not contextualized with reference to the essay as a whole. Almost as soon as Roy claims to have abandoned Nehru, she comes back to him—in the very first paragraph of what promises to be a tale of the small. The story of the dam in India begins, for Roy, with the famous speech in which Nehru called dams the temples of modern India—a speech, which, in Roy's words, "he grew to regret in his own lifetime."[16] The implications are clear—if Nehru himself was capable of recognizing the folly of big dams, so should we. This statement is more an affirmation of Nehru's legacy than a rejection.

With respect to nonalignment, Roy is even more unequivocal in embracing a recognizably Nehruvian inheritance. While she does not explicitly mention Nehru's foreign policy, in *An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire* (2004) Roy expresses outrage at:

> Our government's craven willingness to abandon India's proud tradition of being non-aligned, its rush to fight its way to the head of the queue of the completely aligned (the fashionable phrase is "natural ally"—India, Israel, and the United States are "natural allies"), has given it the legroom to turn into a repressive regime without compromising its legitimacy.[17]

Roy's praise of nonalignment, together with her recognition that its opposite is alignment with the United States (and, by extension, its allies), is distinctly Nehruvian. Importantly, national and transnational politics are also closely linked in this statement, with the abandonment of nonalignment associated with a threat to democracy. Contrary to the logic of "soft power," which suggests that outside (particularly Western) influences aid the process of democratization, Roy emphasizes the need for democratic national governments to be responsive to and prioritize the needs of their citizens, as defined by those citizens, rather than adhere to externally imposed agendas.

At the same time, she declares that "[n]o individual nation can stand up to the project of corporate globalization on its own."[18] The minimum agenda that she feels will enable transnational resistance to globalization is opposition to imperialism, an agenda that surely reiterates the original Bandung project. Since nationalism has played an important role in resisting imperialism for at least the last century—and was central to the nonalignment movement, as many of the countries represented at the Bandung conference were still engaged in anticolonial struggles at the time of the meeting—Roy's vision of democracy in *An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire* bears many similarities to Nehru's.

Similarly, Roy's collection *War Talk* (2003), in its insistence on a just state and on the necessity of grassroots resistance, emerges as inescapably nationalistic, despite her ostensible rejection of the discourse of nationalism. Her praise of nonviolent grassroots resistance and her willingness to accept an unproblematic role for herself as spokesperson for the locally grounded, predominantly subaltern Narmada dam movement is more than a little Gandhian, with all the contradictions that the Gandhian position entails. Evidence that Roy is in fact a nationalist, and that her nationalism takes on a Nehruvian as well as a Gandhian tradition is contained in her use of language. It is her belief that underneath India's political chaos a "single heart

beats."[19] Ironically, Roy also evokes India as corporeal even as she decries the notion of India as corporate:

> Corporitizing India is like trying to impose an iron grid on a heaving ocean and forcing it to behave.
>
> My guess is that India will not behave. It cannot. It's too old and too clever to be made to jump through the hoops all over again. It's too diverse, too grand, too feral, and—eventually, I hope—too democratic to be lobotomized into believing one single idea, which is, ultimately, what globalization really is: Life is Profit.[20]

Whether or not one accepts Roy's understanding of globalization—certainly, the term is not consistently defined or employed in the manner she describes, but a full discussion of that controversy is beyond the scope of this book—her elision of the corporate and the corporeal has certain striking features. As we have already seen, the corporeal vision of India is one that Nehru used almost obsessively. This anthropomorphizing of India, also ubiquitous in the fiction of other Indian writers, evokes a far more traditional version of the nation than both Roy's critics and detractors usually associate with her. Significantly, Roy's employment of the trope is decidedly romantic in tone; India, for Roy, is grand and akin to the ocean, suggesting that it is an unstoppable natural force whose innate desire for freedom, like that of a feral animal, cannot be contained by Western systems. This naturalization of the nation bears, as I will show in the next section, important similarities to more traditional nationalist discourse.

Indeed, in *An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire,* Roy decries the nation-state, not for its inevitable exercise of hegemonic power, but for failing to exercise that power in the name of the nation. Thus, she argues that the state should own natural and cultural resources and hold them in public trust. Similarly, she locates the danger of multinational corporations in their lack of accountability to the state and, thus, to the nation as a whole.[21] Roy thus reinscribes the paradox at the heart of Nehru's thought and his version of nonalignment—that true resistance to imperialism requires both a strong nation-state and strong allegiances between states. Despite arguing passionately for internationalism, Nehru presided over an India that fought wars with both of its larger neighbors—China and Pakistan—and also used force (or the threat of force) to bring neighboring colonial outposts, such as Goa and Bhutan, under Indian control. This apparent contradiction was at the very core of Nehru's philosophy of nonalignment, which, he always admitted, had to coincide with national self-interest.[22]

Roy herself denies being antinational, as suggested by her Indian critics. Instead, she calls herself "anti-nationalist" and says intellectuals should not align themselves with the state.[23] Being simply antinational is an idea she sees as reductive and conducive to the sort of binary, aligned thinking that she wants to oppose and deconstruct; indeed, she compares the label "anti-national" to "anti-American," which, as I will discuss below, she does not associate with her own opposition to American hegemony. Roy prefers to sees herself as a global intellectual, a category that she uses to describe thinkers such as Edward Said and Noam Chomsky, whom she sees as the true voice of America.[24] Julie Mullaney notes that Chomsky has been an important influence on Roy, particularly since 9/11, and that Roy has been involved in promoting his thought by supporting the reprinting of his back catalogue by their shared publisher. She also wrote the introduction to one of his recent books, *For Reasons of State* (2003).[25]

Opposition to globalization is thus inexorably linked to the formation of global alliances and to an ability to synthesize diverse sources in producing a comprehensive critique of the discourse of power. What needs to be globalized, according to Roy (in a turn of phrase that seems to echo Chomsky), is dissent.[26] Such dissent is not anarchic but essential to a constructive program that, as Roy emphasizes, ultimately advances the causes of democracy, development, and modernity; rebuffing those critics who perceive her opposition to large dams and their corporate connections as antidevelopment, she emphasizes that she "is demanding *more* modernity, not less . . . *more* democracy, not less."[27] Much like Nehru, whose chief criticism of the British was their bad faith—that is, their failure to bring to India the liberal democracy and economic freedom that Britain ostensibly stood for—Roy thus sees dissent as a means of enforcing the West's (and particularly America's) own standards of national and international conduct.

Roy's choice of Said and Chomsky as exemplary global figures also demonstrates her complicated relationship with the United States. Americans are, for Roy, the ultimate experts on world affairs—and not just in the way that America's hegemonic power structures would have us believe. Indeed, Americans, for Roy, because of their central position in the world order, are also the most qualified to assess it; consequently, "the most scholarly, scathing, hilarious critiques of the U.S. government and the 'American Way of Life' come from American citizens."[28] This praise comes, however, with a caution: "American citizens have a huge responsibility riding on their shoulders,"[29] because only American civil society has any chance of mounting a serious challenge to the American government.[30] Like Nehru's then, Roy's construction of nonalignment is unmistakably unipolar.

The war on terror has brought a new dimension to this unipolar world system. Since September 11, 2001, the United States has sought to construct a "coalition of the willing" to support its position on a range of issues, most notably the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Other nations such as Canada and France, who were allies of the United States during the cold war and are, despite not achieving the same level of global cultural dominance as the United States, still clear beneficiaries of current trade imbalances, have had an uneasy relationship with this new power arrangement. In this context, the problem of nonalignment no longer pertains exclusively to the countries of Africa and Asia, or the so-called third, or developing, world.[31]

Indeed, for Roy, globalization and terror are, in essence, the opposite sides of the same coin, and she appropriates the discourse of business to explicate the origins of September 11, stating that "[t]errorism has no country. It's transnational, as global an enterprise as Coke or Pepsi or Nike."[32] Furthermore, she characterizes Osama Bin Laden as "the inspirational figure, 'the CEO of the holding company.'"[33] In positioning Bin Laden specifically as the head of a holding company, Roy emphasizes both the nonproductive nature of the terror enterprise (holding companies simply own other companies, they do not provide goods or services) and also the destructive (because self-sustaining) potentialities of capitalism that, likewise, despite its rhetoric, is not necessarily productive, as the phenomenon of the potential profitability of the holding company illustrates.

Indeed, globalization for Roy is not so much about nation as about class, which is the quintessential unit of both communism and capitalism. It is the elite and the dispossessed who stand on opposite sides of the global divide, not the West and the rest, the democrats and the terrorists.[34] But elsewhere, she is quick to bridge this divide as she defines her constituency: "When I say 'us,' I mean people, human beings. Not countries, not governments."[35] As a notion, universal humanity owes much to liberal individualist modes of thought and seems to contradict Roy's own assertion about the essential difference between subaltern and elite subjects. Alternatively, her yoking of these seemingly incompatible views of the world's populace—both homogenous and inescapably heterogeneous—suggests an expansion of the ideal of unity in diversity to a global scale.

This belief in unity in diversity is a larger projection of her view of the Indian nation, which, though organized around a different cause (opposition to the Narmada Valley dam), strongly resembles Nehru's vision of Congress party activism:

> We walked for three hours—farmers, fisherfolk, sand quarries, writers, painters, filmmakers, lawyers, journalists. All of India represented. Urban, rural,

> touchable, untouchable. This alliance is what gives the movement its raw power, its intellectual rigor, and its phenomenal tenacity . . . I remember thinking: This is my land, this is the dream to which the whole of me belongs, this is worth more to me than anything else in the world.[36]

Indeed, in *War Talk,* Roy emphasizes diversity as India's essential quality.[37] Her belief in a civilizational ethos echoes Aijaz Ahmad (who, in turn, draws on Nehru).[38] Just as the nationalists were able to argue for the existence of an entity named India in the absence of a corresponding nation-state, Roy claims that "India's redemption lies in the inherent anarchy and factiousness of its people, and in the legendary inefficacy of the Indian state."[39] The separation of the people of India (implicitly a nation) from the state (whose inadequacy she slyly celebrates) is also decidedly nationalist in a traditional sense (after all, anticolonial nationalists imagined just such a distinction). At the same time, it is a vision of the nation that is more compatible with globalization than one that requires an absolute identification between nation and state, since it constructs a nation whose existence is not threatened by the corporate erosion of state power.

Key to Nehru's construction of both India and Indianization is an underlying sense of India as an ecological unit. Firstly, Nehru's construction of his imagined India (whose borders coincided neither with colonial or British India nor with partitioned, independent India) depends on a notion of national organicity that evokes geographic considerations to argue for a particular, bounded version of the state. The oceans and mountains are offered as the natural limits of India, whose geographical wholeness corresponds to a symbolic unity, a culture that spans "the length and breadth of the land" (DI 59). In the mountains Nehru sees "old myth and legend," while the rivers evoke "innumerable phases of our history" (DI 51). History and geography are thus inexorably linked, and their center is the Ganges, whose story is "the story of India's civilization and culture" (DI 51). The Ganges is also associated with India's heart, a comparison with obvious religious and mythical connotations (DI 51).

The hybrid Indian culture is both a result and an aspect of the "environment," according to Nehru (DI 257). The author derives the notion of indigenization from Dodwell, but takes his inquiries a step further, however, in attempting to uncover the nature of, and the reason for, the "overmastering surroundings" his predecessor describes.[40]

> Partly to the influence of geography and climate, to the very air of India. But much more so, surely to some powerful impulse, some tremendous urge, or idea of the significance of life, that was impressed upon the subconscious

> mind of India when she was fresh and young at the very dawn of her history. That impress was strong enough to persist and to affect all those who came into contact with her, and thus to absorb them into her fold howsoever they differed.
>
> (DI 143)

India, here, is not a culture so much as an ecology, in which the terrain itself creates diversity, and Indianness is something infectious and endemic. As such, both are essential and transhistorical. Harmony is posited as the natural state that characterizes the past and under which Indian civilization ought to exist. This view of Indianness contrasts, of course, with the notion of Indianization as a historically locatable process, which I discussed in chapter 1.

Indeed, regardless of the economic impact of globalization, the nation may continue to be an important source of cultural identification, particularly outside the West. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak succinctly puts it, "[i]n spite of the fact that the effects of globalization can be felt all over the world, that there are satellite dishes in Nepalese villages, the opposite is never true."[41] In other words, global culture exists in only a very limited, and unipolar, sense. Like the world of the cold war, it constructs, in its unipolarity, a false binary opposition. While Roy sees George W. Bush's government presenting the world's citizens with a stark, absolute choice between the United States and terror,[42] she emphasizes that "the people of the world do not have to choose between the Taliban and the U.S. government. All the beauty of human civilization—our art, our music, our literature—lies beyond these two fundamentalist, ideological poles."[43] In other words, culture is the domain of nonalignment. On an aesthetic level, this is reflected in her refusal of any kind of rules for art, beyond the need to "to fly, to push at the frontiers, to worry the edges of the human imagination, to conjure up beauty from the most unexpected things, to find magic in places where others never thought to look."[44] As such, despite her own politicization, Roy decries the use of art as a political tool and denies that politicized criteria can be used in its evaluation.

Roy's focus on blurring boundaries, together with her environmentalism, evokes similarities between her thought and the recent work of Spivak, who posits planetarity in opposition to globalization. In its recognition of the earth as an ecological unit, planetarity would seem to offer an alternative to globalization that, while acknowledging the importance of the nonlocal and transnational in the realm of both economics and culture, makes interdependence, not corporate capitalism, the basis for thinking about our role as global citizens. Planetarity offers the opportunity to think of the earth as

a unit while emphasizing the possibilities of alterity it contains.[45] Yet the globe and the planet are not, Spivak emphasizes, binary terms; rather, the planet is an uncanny version of the place we call home. "Planet-thought" includes both the "names of alterity" and "the whole range of human universals" and, as such, offers a more elegant formulation of Roy's seemingly contradictory stance.[46] The planet functions, for Spivak, as a literary figure. In her elucidation of planetarity as a literary trope, Spivak points to a focus on boundaries that evokes their erasure, thus offering a critical theoretical counterpart to the politics of nonalignment that in its emphasis on defamiliarization also goes beyond them.

Planetarity, despite drawing on certain aspects of ecological discourse, should not be confused with a simplistic environmentalism. Environmentalism, for Spivak, is more akin to globalization than to planetarity. Certainly, both the environmental movement and ecocriticism stress the essential naturalness of human life and the relationship between humans and their surroundings and, thus, are the obverse of the defamiliarizing gesture that Spivak associates with planetarity. In its view of the earth as an organic whole that nevertheless contains identifiable units (ecosystems) of which humans are a part, but also, paradoxically, separate (since it stresses our special roles as both stewards and potential destroyers), environmentalism mirrors the contradictions that inhere in the simultaneous nationalism and internationalism of nonalignment. The continuities and discontinuities between environmentalism and planetarity offer, I argue, a useful analogy for conceptualizing the relationship between Nehru's thought and Roy's, though Roy's thought certainly does not have Spivak's theoretical rigor. Indeed, Roy's approach to the landscape is suspended uncertainly between Spivak's and an earlier, more romantic nationalist vision epitomized by Nehru. This liminal and, at times, contradictory position is evident in her fiction as well and accounts for the extremely diverse critical reception of *The God of Small Things.*

Reading Nonalignment in *The God of Small Things*

The God of Small Things tells the story of a family torn apart by the death of a child, Sophie Mol; the affair between a "caste" Syrian Christian, Ammu (Sophie's aunt), and an untouchable, Velutha; and the subsequent death of the latter and exiling of the former along with her young son. While all these events are packed into a few short days, the novel is framed by the reunion of twins Rahel and Estha (Ammu's children and Sophie's cousin) more than twenty years later, which occurs after both Rahel and Estha have

spent most of their lives away from Kerala and each other. The first cause of these tragic events is deemed to be the "Love Laws" that determine "who should be loved and how. And how much."[47] While, on the one hand, the narrative contends that "things can change in a day" (GST 32), it thus also sees history as an inexorable and, paradoxically, ahistorical force to which individuals inevitably submit (GST 281). This contradictory approach to teleology and time has drawn attention from several critics. Madhu Benoit, for instance, argues that Roy's handling of time is essentially dual.[48] Alexandra Podgorniak sees Roy's interweaving of past and present as akin to Rushdie's, an inevitable comparison considering the prominence of pickling as a metaphor in both *The God of Small Things* and *Midnight's Children.*[49]

The God of Small Things, like Roy's political writings, is not an unequivocal celebration of the small in opposition to the large, despite what the title suggests. Though overtly rejecting national allegory as a governing conceit in favor of an emphasis on the domestic, the marginal, and the unspeakable, the novel cannot refrain from overarching generalization. Indeed, *The God of Small Things* picks up on many nationalist tropes, critiquing the state through catachresis. India, for Roy, is still a body politic, but the government is like the body of a baby and poorly coordinated (GST 117). When the twins go to meet Sophie Mol at the airport, they are informed that they are both ambassadors of India, and the term ambassador is repeatedly affixed to both Estha and Rahel in the narrative (GST 139). Roy thus self-reflexively toys with the problem of performing as a representative of the nation.

History (and Roy uses the capital "H") still looms large. Despite the faux-naïve perspective that has garnered Roy both praise and criticism, the narrator repeatedly "flits back and forth between childhood and a wiser, sadder adult existence,"[50] and even when aligned with the children, repeatedly steps away to provide synopsis of Keralan political and religious development and to speculate on topics such as the distinctive nature of Keralan communism, which Roy describes as a "heady mix of Eastern Marxism and Orthodox Hinduism, spiked with a shot of democracy" (GST 67). This vision of Keralan politics places a distinctive local phenomenon—an elected communist government—within a globalized ideological context. The infusion of the global and the local is literal as well as ideological, as evident from the pesticides, purchased with World Bank funds, that pollute the river that runs through Estha and Rahel's childhood home. Thus, international economic forces, made visible via the World Bank, write the very landscape of the novel, a phenomenon I will return to in the next section.

Even as the novel declares its focus on the local, then, it is ever-conscious of the larger world. Indeed, *The God of Small Things* is fascinated with "Edges, Borders, Boundaries, Brinks and Limits" (GST 3). When the adult Rahel returns to Ayemenem, the air itself is "thick" with television, an indication of the invasion of inescapably Western influences (GST 188). The extent of Western culture's penetration into India is revealed through Rahel's discovery that Kochu Maria, who once conceded only reluctantly that Americans existed (and certainly did not believe that any citizens of that nation had ever walked on the moon), is now obsessed with television, preferring its reality to the world beyond her home (GST 27–28). In its vacillation between the local and the global, its dwelling on the edges, the novel develops a version of nonalignment that simultaneously challenges and reinforces the hegemonic discourse of power. Laws are continuously invoked only so that their violation can be highlighted.

There are a number of potential loci for reading a discourse of nonalignment in *The God of Small Things.* Given Roy's origins and the story's location in Kerala, discussions of communism and capitalism have inevitably informed some aspects of the novel's content and reception.[51] This is not to say that the novel centers on the polemics of competing socioeconomic discourses. Actual encounters between the forces of communism and capitalism in the novel are depicted with humor and often tinged with irony. Given that *The God of Small Things* emphasizes communism's failure to liberate either women or untouchables—a fact made explicit in the deaths of Ammu and Velutha, respectively—it could hardly be otherwise. The son of Comrade Pillai, the novel's preeminent communist, has grown up, as the novel opens, to work as a service contractor for the foreign embassies in New Delhi (GST 14). The color has bled away from the once-red flag that hung before his home (GST 13). The misappropriation of legitimate economic grievances for personal ends is perhaps made most blatant by the so-called orangedrink-lemondrink man (GST 105). When Estha is sexually abused by the unnamed man who runs the concessions stand at the movie theater, the perpetrator strongly implies that such abuse is Estha's due for coming from a privileged home. Indeed, the fact that his family owns a pickle factory makes Estha locatable and thus, the abuser hints, liable to further abuse and punishment should the orangedrink-lemondrink man's actions be revealed (GST 109). Estha's association with capitalist production thus makes him more vulnerable, not less. The irony, of course, is that his position in the household (along with that of his sister and mother) is highly tenuous, and the orangedrink-lemondrink man's actions indirectly make it more so.

Rahel also largely fails to benefit from her association with a better-off family and its investment in capitalist production. Though she receives a good education and moves to the United States, evoking a potential narrative of upward mobility, Rahel in fact finds herself working as a night-gas-station attendant, a job without prestige or good pay, and which is physically dangerous. When she returns to Kerala, she has no definite plans for the future and an attitude toward time that distances her from the utopianism of both capitalism and communism. If Velutha's status as a card-carrying member of the Communist party fails to protect him from caste-based discrimination, an allegiance to capitalism proves equally unhelpful.

As children, Estha and Rahel had sometimes played in a dilapidated colonial bungalow, whose neglect, and status as the setting for the brutal beating of Velutha, demonstrates the ideological bankruptcy both of the imperial legacy and of the newly independent nation and its states. When Rahel returns to Kerala as an adult, she observes that the former colonial home that the children had dubbed the "History House" is now a hotel and that among the other local dwellings, one is advertised to tourists as:

> the ancestral home of Comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad, 'Kerala's Mao Tse-Tung' . . . So there it was then, History and Literature enlisted by commerce. Kurtz and Karl Marx joining palms to greet rich guests as they stepped off the boat.
>
> (GST 126)

Ironically, even Kerala's communist history is available for commodification. This vision of Kurtz and Karl Marx engaged in the joint promotion of capitalist consumption and cultural exoticization certainly makes clear Roy's critical distance from both ideological systems and signals her association with nonalignment, in that she identifies the shared imperialistic impulse underlying ostensibly competing ideologies. Roy's criticism of globalization is clearly not indicative of any simplistic affiliation with communism. Indeed, communism is described in the novel as a "religion turned against itself," a description that indicates that Roy, at best, sees it as self-defeating and, at worst, given the hypocrisy and unhappiness associated with religion in the text, as destructive and dishonest (GST 287).

Hypocrisy is not only the prerogative of communists. During Rahel's childhood, perhaps nothing better exposes the fallacious opposition between the two ideologies than Uncle Chacko's game of "*Comrade! Comrade!*" (GST 65), which the children imitate without either knowing the implication of the

appellation or seeing the irony of their uncle using the term to address women—his subordinates—he is attempting to seduce. When the family is accidentally caught in a communist march, Chacko is certainly no more eager than his mother or aunt to make contact with the protestors, and his affectation of calm is entirely unconvincing. Indeed, all idealism is constructed as naïve, with that of Nehru being particularly romanticized. Nehru is a costume for the innocent Estha to don, just as Rahel dresses up as a maharani (GST 158). The fact that it is the unabused, talkative Estha who dons the costume (rather than the Estha who is sent away) is indicative of an idealized vision of Nehru—one that is as inevitably doomed as childhood innocence. Like Roy's nonfiction, *The God of Small Things* thus constructs a more nuanced and sympathetic relationship to Indian nationalism than is often assumed. The only binary that the novel embraces unproblematically is between the "overthrowers" and the "overthrown," an opposition that would seem to reiterate her emphasis on the opposition between the elite and the subaltern in Roy's nonfiction (GST 280).

For critics, the relationship between the elite and the subaltern in the novel has proven intensely problematic and more complex than Roy herself overtly allows. Aijaz Ahmad, for instance, argues that in focusing on the realm of the erotic as the primary realm of (politicized) transgression, Roy depicts "the actually constituted field of politics as either irrelevant or a zone of bad faith,"[52] thereby ultimately producing a novel that is dismissive of Kerala's communist history and that serves to "(v)indicate a capitalist politics."[53] Brinda Bose, however, disagrees, arguing that Roy's emphasis on sexual pleasure as a source of political transgression foregrounds gender in such a way that can be linked to, without excluding, a larger politics, pointing out that in addition to desiring Velutha's body, Ammu also wishes a revolutionary politics for him (GST 175–176).

Yet the revolutionary potential of Ammu's act cannot be asserted unequivocally, because the so-called love laws do not actually seem to apply to anyone in the novel—not to Baby Kochamma, whose love for a European man of another religion leads to a life of suppressed passion; nor to Uncle Chacko, who sees no contradiction in sexually harassing his workers as he encourages them to unionize; nor to Ammu, who loses everything because of her affair with a Dalit man; nor to Estha and Rahel, who, at the end of the book, violate the incest taboo. But are any of these transgressions truly subversive? Certainly, though deviance is almost normative in this novel, the frequency of rebellion seems to do nothing to challenge the status quo. Retribution is swift in *The God of Small Things,* and the apportioning of suffering inevitable, according to hierarchies of caste, gender, and age.

These moments of punishment inflicted on characters for their violation of caste, class, gender, and sexual conventions are linked explicitly to the failures of nonalignment as a foreign policy. The war between India and Pakistan also marks an intensification of domestic violence in Ammu's married home. Whereas, previously, Ammu's husband confined himself to attacking his wife, when the war breaks out, he also begins to beat his young children, forcing the dissolution of the marriage and the end of Ammu's dreams (GST 42). The aftermath of this violent marriage, and the social marginalization that results from Ammu's courageous departure from her marital home, leaves her filled with "the reckless rage of a suicide bomber" (GST 44). This, too, would seem to link her domestic story to larger, often anti-imperial, modes of resistance. Yet, as Roy unequivocally states in *War Talk,* she sees suicide bombing as an "act of individual despair, not a revolutionary tactic."[54] As such, the suicide bomber presents no real challenge to hegemonic structures—indeed, according to Roy, in the long term, they may help perpetuate the status quo by justifying the very exercises of power that produced these conditions of despair in the first place.

Similarly, the death of Sophie Mol, Chacko's daughter, produces a private, domestic grief that nevertheless corresponds to a larger political narrative. The event is referred to as "the terror," a label that clearly invokes larger political events, which, like acts of political terror, gain their primary significance from the ways in which they haunt the survivors. The real terror in *The God of Small Things* is reserved for Estha and Rahel, Sophie Mol's younger companions, who, unlike her, can swim and thus survive the overturning of their boat. Their coming of age is marked with the realization that self-destruction may be the only available form of resistance, and an ineffective one at that.

It is perhaps no surprise, then, that the political potential of *The God of Small Things* has been hotly debated among critics. Marta Dvorak, for instance, links Roy's success to her ability to domesticate the unfamiliar for the Western reader, a position that largely coincides with Graham Huggan's assertion that the novel is one example of what he has labeled the "postcolonial exotic."[55] Alexandra Podgorniak similarly sees in *The God of Small Things* "submission and submergence not only to European but also to South American literary representation," even as the novel's use of language challenges the boundaries and provenance of both English and its national literature(s).[56] Elleke Boehmer, while praising Roy's verbal inventiveness, also calls attention to the novel's investment in Western cultural forms and its uneasy relationship with Orientalist stereotypes.[57] Boehmer sees in Roy's work and her critical reception a complex process of play related to the emerging global marketplace and the very conditions of academic literary criticism. Florence Cabaret similarly sees the novel depicting a process of

attempting to move beyond classificatory categories, particularly at the national level, rendering itself the very sort of globalized product that makes Roy so uncomfortable.[58] Alex Tickell takes a similarly equivocal view, pointing out that *The God of Small Things* occupies a place in the literary market place that, as Huggan has demonstrated, compels much contemporary literature to occupy an interstitial position.[59] Indeed, the unusual relationship between Estha and Rahel—which, according to Tickell, challenges the boundaries of individual subjectivity—recreates the dilemma of nonalignment on a personal level.

The doubleness that characterizes the novel's content and its critical reception corresponds to the contradictions at the heart of Roy's prose writing and self-marketing, which, as Mullaney notes, have served to make Roy a successful "brand" in the realm of both publishing and antiglobalization discourse.[60] Huggan further notes that Roy's physical attractiveness and her previous media experience (she worked as a journalist in India prior to the publication of *The God of Small Things*) facilitated her success as both an author and an activist, and were instrumental in her ability to exploit her cultural capital as writer to increase her authority as a representative of India's downtrodden.[61]

If Roy has incorporated nonalignment as a deconstructive gesture, it is not one that ultimately allows her to transcend "the big" or the discourse of power. The novel is thus not about nonalignment as neutrality—the two have sometimes been wrongly associated. The only example of neutrality in the novel is Estha's silence (GST 10), which corresponds to self-erasure. Instead, the impossibility of refusing the discourse of power or remaining neutral in the world of the novel is illustrated through the most mundane facets of the characters' lives. The family pickle business stops production of one of its favorite preserves, made of bananas, because, according to the government, this food must be banned, since it cannot be classified according to the food industry's strict binary system, being neither fully jam nor jelly (GST 30). The consequence of even the most banal attempt to exist between binary categories—whether communism and capitalism or jelly and jam—is annihilation.

While Roy has continued Nehru's work and the work of nonalignment by thinking beyond the binaries of Western discourse by positioning nonalignment in perpetual opposition to power, she posits an alternative that has the potential, paradoxically, to be both more radical and more conservative in the realm of realpolitik. On the one hand, her normalizing of transgression and her refusal to respect the generic or disciplinary boundaries that delineate activist from author, and novel from manifesto, offer an invigorating possibility for rethinking categories such as local, global, development,

and modernity, both within and beyond the nation-state. On the other hand, she sometimes seems to inscribe all acts of resistance as doomed. She tries to speak for the subaltern even as she argues in *War Talk* that the process of globalization has rendered the elite and the rest as irreconcilable opponents.[62] She admits that she does not have a consistent ideological position and, in *An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire,* dismisses those critics who draw those contradictions to her attention.[63] Her comparison of her own work with Said's and Chomsky's is also, at best, problematic.

Roy's work, both fiction and nonfiction, is beset with contradictions. Mullaney documents how Roy's antiglobalization writings, as a whole, are beset with "problematic 'rhetorical' conflations" and "dangerous moral equivalences,"[64] and is especially troubled by her "uncritical deployment of simplified figures of female oppression," particularly given that Roy does understand globalization itself as gendered in its effects.[65] Indeed, critics who have read *The God of Small Things* as politically radical have also focused on its mobilization of female and feminist perspectives.[66] Roy's stereotyping of homosexuality in the novel is another indication that her politics is not entirely liberating with regard to gender and sexuality.[67] As Huggan has noted, Roy's prose in *The Cost of Living* is "a curiously unresolved mixture—part hard-headed investigative report, part sentimental political fable, part historically situated postcolonial allegory."[68] This lack of resolution is both its weakness and its strength. Paradoxically, antiglobalization activism tends to be, in and of itself, a globalizing project.

The God of Small Things as World Bank Literature?

If the goal of nonalignment was to stave off the possibility of a third world war (a possibility always latent in the cold war context),[69] then the concept of World Bank literature, which responds to a world where a fourth world war, engendered by the politics of globalization, may seem imminent, offers nonalignment a potential new relevance in the twenty-first century.[70] Insofar as it enables us to distinguish globalization as an agent of capitalism and imperialism from globalization as internationalism—an elision that, according to Doug Henwood, often clouds the terms of contemporary economic and cultural debates—non-alignment helps us to situate a writer and thinker such as Roy in a way that acknowledges her self-contradictions but does not dismiss her for them.[71]

As Amitava Kumar points out, the very term "'World Bank Literature' is a provocation" intended "to invite inquiry into globalization, the economy, and the role of literary and cultural studies."[72] *The God of Small Things* is one of the examples Kumar invokes in setting the terms of this investigation.

While the literal presence of the World Bank may be marginal in the novel, confined to the pollution of the river where Estha and Rahel swam as children (an example mentioned in the previous section), the complex relationship between art and globalization that the category invokes permeates the novel far more widely. Indeed, the symbolic dimension of the river's pollution is clear—this is the same river that claims the life of Sophie Mol and thus it already contains the power of destruction and represents the loss of innocence.

Indeed, Roy's reception in Britain illustrates the ways in which she herself is deeply ensconced in the very global structures she critiques; the British media has repeatedly constructed Roy as the singular voice both of India's antiglobalization movement and of opposition to the Narmada Valley dam, when in fact there are multiple organizations at the center of each, with long histories of struggle predating Roy's involvement. Rashmi Varma argues that Roy's depiction of and association with the tribal peoples who are Narmada's primary victims enable her to "come to terms with the paradoxes of . . . [her] class origins and political commitments."[73] While Varma argues that the tribal now provides a legitimizing myth for "globalizing processes involved in contesting development" rather than for the nation, as it did in the past, and is consequently less romantic than earlier depictions, I contend that there are continuities between Nehru's portrayal of peasants, which will be discussed further in chapter 7, and Roy's representation of Adivasis.[74] Certainly, both Nehru and Roy struggle with the conflicting need to portray their subaltern subjects as abject victims, and so emphasize the degree of injustice to which they are subject, while simultaneously affording them the dignity that makes it possible for them to be recuperated as active agents and potential citizens, whether of the nation or of the globe.

Ultimately, neither Roy's writing, whether fiction or nonfiction, nor her performances as writer, activist, and spokesperson could possibly smooth away the contradictions inherent in writing as an Indian in English in the context of a globalized world, all of which can be distilled into the tensions contained in World Bank literature. In our eagerness to advance new categories to think subjects such as Roy's and her texts, however, it is important not to erase the links between the old and the new, the present and the past. Indeed, the World Bank and the nonalignment movement trace their origins to the same historical moment—namely the ashes of the Second World War—and the causes they champion are intimately, if sometimes antithetically, interlinked. Reading Nehru's politics of nonalignment in Roy's work thus helps restore both the original historical context for the story of *The God of Small Things* and the intellectual inheritance that informs her nonfiction.

CHAPTER 6

States of Dystopia: Imagining Future Indias in Ruchir Joshi's *The Last Jet-Engine Laugh*

In this chapter, I examine the ways in which Ruchir Joshi's *The Last Jet-Engine Laugh* (2001), set a few decades into the twenty-first century, deconstructs the processes of systematisation that are intrinsic to the Indian state—indeed, to all modern states—and its social forms.[1] Unlike earlier examples of postcolonial dystopic writing, which often critiqued particular "isms"—imperialism or chauvinism, for instance—this novel refuses the very possibility of ideological consistency.[2] The world of the novel invokes a set of problems, including violence and environmental degradation, which do not exist within the boundaries of causal relationships. *The Last Jet-Engine Laugh* represents Joshi's first foray into the world of fiction. Though not well known in the West, in India he was already an established filmmaker and journalist.

Joshi's novel represents a distinctive contribution to the body of Indian literature in English that deals with representations of the nation in a number of ways. While both realism and magical realism are well known to readers of postcolonial literature, postcolonial science fiction has only just begun to garner popular and critical attention.[3] On a political level, *The Last Jet-Engine Laugh* is the only novel covered in this volume to pay significant attention to the legacy of an Indian nationalist leader little known, and largely neglected, in the West: Subhas Chandra Bose. Close allies early on in the nationalist struggle, both with similarly high profiles, Jawaharlal Nehru and Bose were to undergo a definitive break several years before the attainment of independence. Despite being less well known outside of India, Bose continues to occupy an important but contested place within the discourse of the Indian nation. On both a generic and an ideological

level, *The Last Jet-Engine Laugh* opens up new ground for the Indian novel in English and its representation of the Indian nation.

Science Fiction in an Indian Context

The use of science fiction as a means to probe and critique the nature of political ideologies and systems has long been familiar to readers of Western literature. In India, however, science fiction has, according to Uppinder Mehan, functioned instead to domesticate previously unfamiliar technology in the context of the increasing prevalence of information technology in Indian social and commercial life.[4] Debjani Sengupta observes a similar phenomenon at work in nineteenth and twentieth century science fiction written in Bengali.[5] In the contemporary Indian science-fiction short story, Mehan argues, the depiction and discussion of new technologies—from cyborgs to alternative energy sources—functions primarily to draw attention to current and, thus, already familiar social problems such as caste and untouchability. Similarly, Salman Rushdie's postcolonial fantasy novel, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999) "uses the meeting of . . . two cosmic worlds to emphasize both the creative possibilities and the dangers inherent in all cross-cultural encounters," thereby allegorizing the very familiar diasporic condition that he and others have made the subject of much nonfiction.[6] Rather than pointing the reader toward future possibilities, then, such science fiction is, ironically, more firmly grounded in the present than the generic label might suggest.

It is worth noting, however, that many of the issues Mehan locates in these stories, including those named above, have long been conceptualized as distinctively nationalist—cultural practices and attributes that come to the fore as problems per se, obstacles that stand in the way of a specifically national progress. This is true of the treatment of phenomena such as untouchability during both the colonial and postcolonial periods. Thus, science fiction in India has arguably long had a national dimension despite its relative paucity and late appearance in Indian literature written in English, which is arguably the most "national." Indeed, according to Samares C. Sanyal, the arrival of mechanization and attendant conflicts with preindustrial modes of production is a recurrent nationalist theme in literature written in English.[7]

Science itself has been essential to the forging of India as a national space both after and prior to independence. In *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India* (1999), Gyan Prakash maps the ways in which scientific discourses and technologies were used by the Raj to construct British India as a knowable, governable space. This project was embraced

with enthusiasm by Indian nationalists, whose principal criticism of the Raj's introduction of Western sciences and technologies to the subcontinent related to the government's imposition of limits on the imports of, for example, industrial machinery, and not in its use of railways or telegraphs to engage in acts of political repression. The discourse of scientific methodology, with its promise of teleological progress and rational improvement, corresponded neatly to the utopian dream of nationalism. Thus, nationalists who diverged in other important respects, such as Nehru and Bose, were united in their belief that science had a key role to play in India's social, economic, and political modernization.

Even M. K. Gandhi, whose view of science and technology is often opposed to that of Nehru, was not, as Prakash clearly demonstrates, the Luddite that he is commonly made out to be. Gandhi objected to infatuation with technology for technology's sake and feared that an uncritical adoption of Western science would lead to the loss of indigenous Indian knowledge and practices, but did not deny that modern technologies could be beneficial and believed that there were situations in which Western scientific discourse could, and should, be embraced. Indeed, Nehru was keen to defend Gandhi against the charge of being opposed to science. One example occurs in his letter to Aldous Huxley, dated September 1, 1933, in which Nehru states that Gandhi's "attitude to science is very far from being hostile. He welcomes it and takes advantage of it in a variety of ways."[8]

Nehru, like Bose, saw the speedy adoption of Western technologies as essential to the success of the nation-state. Nehru's well-known statement that dams are the temples of modern India marked not only the reverence with which India would now officially hold Western-originated technology, but also its enthusiastic acceptance of the narrative of progress and development that the model of scientific inquiry has traditionally held out. This commitment to science by Nehru and the governments he led was manifest in a variety of ways. As an individual, Nehru frequently accepted invitations to address scientific associations and professional bodies and attended openings and celebrations of particular scientific institutions. The speeches he gave on these occasions exhort both the nation and its citizens to embrace science, envisioning the practice of science aiding in endeavors ranging from addressing the prevalence of hunger to facilitating international cooperation among nations.[9] On the level of policy, the governments led by Nehru favored the development of heavy industry and increasing India's capacity for power generation, embraced innovations in agricultural production, supported medical research, and advocated a central place for science at all levels of education, an agenda made explicit in successive five-year plans. In addition, in 1958, the government of India adopted a "Scientific Policy

Resolution," which envisions science producing wealth, compensating for India's relative paucity of natural resources, improving the standard of living, and increasing the productivity of Indian workers. These utopic ends can *only* be achieved, according to the resolution, "through the scientific approach and method and the use of scientific knowledge."[10]

At the same time, as the site of the world's worst industrial accident (precipitated by Union Carbide, in Bhopal) and of controversial megaprojects, such as the Narmada Valley dam, vocally criticized by, among others, writer and activist Arundhati Roy, India's relationship to technology has been a prominent subject of public debate throughout the twentieth century. More recently, science and technology have also generated social anxieties. India's current economic growth has been largely attributed to the success of its high-tech and service sectors—largely dependent on the outsourcing of labor by Western-based corporations. The social and cultural consequences of these developments are only just beginning to be explored. The erasure of identities required by the operators of call centers (workers must deny their own names and geographical location while answering customer service queries), together with the sleep deprivation that accompanies the shifting schedule of such workers, may have lasting social consequences.[11] Similarly, the uneven distribution of technological resources, coupled with official and unofficial efforts at addressing this very fact, is sure to affect India's socioeconomic fabric.

Resistance to, and suspicion of, science and its methods is also evident in the world of fiction. Amitav Ghosh's novel *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1997) imagines a practice of counterscience that is arguably more effective than conventional Western-originated science as a mode of knowing, and which demonstrates the very arrogance and limitation (not to mention colonialism) of scientific practice. Ghosh critiques scientific practice via the story of a scientist, Ronald Ross, and his work, exposing the collusion between research and colonialism that persists to this day, but ultimately offers redemption in the form of community and probable immortality to the novel's protagonists.[12] Structurally, *The Calcutta Chromosome* gestures toward narrative closure, with the main character, Murugan, investigating, and eventually discovering, the fate of a coworker who disappeared years earlier.

It is only recently, however, that science fiction, as a specifically national paradigm, has emerged in Indian literature in English. Whereas Ghosh's novel invokes science as a tool of colonial knowledge and therefore Orientalism and oppression, *The Last Jet-Engine Laugh* sees forces of nationalism and internationalism making equally oppressive use of technology. In contrast to *The Calcutta Chromosome,* in which technology paradoxically

helps lead the main character to the truth of counterscience, *The Last Jet-Engine Laugh* associates technology more generally—from the emergence of water substitutes to new fighter planes—with violent conflict, social and political disintegration, environmental degradation, and indeterminacy. Its target is the Indian nation-state. In this, *The Last Jet-Engine Laugh* may most resemble Upamanyu Chatterjee's *Mammaries of the Welfare State* (2000). But while the latter is also set in the future, the date is almost incidental to the satirical arc in *Mammaries of the Welfare State,* and, unlike Joshi's novel, technology is not a prominent concern for Chatterjee. Furthermore, many of the scientifically oriented concerns of the early nationalists reappear in sinister form within this novel. Every intervention, from water management to scientific education, becomes potentially deadly. Even the apparent solution of present social problems—such as discrimination against women—occurs in such a way as to undermine any possibility of reading the events in question as progressive.

Bose and the Indian Past

According to Ralph Pordzik, one of the features of postcolonial dystopic writing that distinguishes it from more familiar forms of science fiction is that the

> pre-dystopian is not rendered as a set of established truths in which all further developments originate. Rather, it represents a site of conflict between different and often mutually exclusive versions of history, between incompatible perceptions of 'truth' engaged in the struggle for cultural control in the narrative present.[13]

Because the past is necessarily uncertain, processes of cause and effect are inevitably called into question. In the absence of an authoritative version of the past, the reader cannot be certain how the dystopic conditions depicted in the novel arose; such texts are not, then, allegories intent on educating the reader on how to avoid the darkly imagined future. In this, such novels may take on the fatalism associated with some understandings of Kaliyug, or the age of Kali, a concept I will discuss further in the next section.

Pordzik further argues that the multiple cultural codes located in the traces of the past are "each designed to preserve (or efface) a particular version of cultural and national identity."[14] For Joshi, the question of India's identity revolves centrally around the nature and extent of the nationalist inheritance. Set in a nightmarish version of Calcutta, a city that has grown monstrous and

anarchic, this novel breaks free of the Gandhi/Nehru, religious/secular binaries that have governed so many images of India. Instead, it offers a tripartite division of historical influences, literalized in an early incident in the life of Paresh Bhatt, the main character and Para's father, in which he is called to the principal's office for having sung a sexually suggestive song in the hearing of his teacher. Behind the principal are portraits of Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi, and Bose, the last being the largest of the three. The principal, we are told, has derived his dress sense from Nehru and his rhetoric from Gandhi. Bose's influence is left unstated (LJL 11).

The remainder of the novel is arguably, however, an allegory of Bose's centrality to the Indian nation. In centering Bose, leader of the Indian National Army (which fought on the side of Japan in the Second World War), Joshi is writing an Indian history in which violence, rather than its rejection, has always been a central principle. Indeed, in *The Last Jet-Engine Laugh,* even silence, one of Gandhi's endorsed methods of passive resistance, is shown to be violent (LJL 289). If Indian history is violent, chaotic, and unknowable, the novel suggests, this is because it has been so at its core since at least the nationalist period. As Renée Schell has shown, the nature and extent of Bose's legacy has been important to Indian democracy since the state's inception, but has not always been explicitly acknowledged.[15]

Ironically, Bose's centrality may be most visible in the controversy that surrounds his death, which may or may not have occurred in 1945, just as India was about to gain independence. For different reasons, both the departing Raj and the emerging Congress government were invested in affirming Bose's death despite the lack of conclusive evidence. Dead, Bose could be brought back into the nationalist mainstream and his very real differences with other Congress leaders—including Nehru and Gandhi, with whom he disagreed on a range of important issues, including nonviolence and the question of India's future associations with the commonwealth—could be smoothed over. This process of appropriation also minimized Bose's strong regional identification with his home province of Bengal, at a time when Bengali identity in particular had been severely tested by Partition, and when the new Indian government felt the need to subjugate all local identities to that of the nation in order to shore up its own uncertain legitimacy.

The imagination of Bose's legacy in the novel takes a number of specific forms, which I will discuss in detail. The emphasis on the interplay of multiple (nonbinary) influences in Indian national history and identity also challenges, in a more general sense, both the dialectical process of reasoning and the narration of history. In *The Last Jet-Engine Laugh,* history's endless narrative possibilities are played out on a computer game,

entitled "Megalopolis 3000." The game is initially purchased for a young girl, Para, in an effort to distract her from an obsession with computer games of military conflict. Megalopolis 3000 promises to offer insights into human relations, yet the options presented by the game are infinite only in theory, and enable the past to be neither captured nor rewritten, and also disturbingly mechanize properties such as love and religious faith. The very first project that Para undertakes with her new toy is an attempt to recreate the meeting of her paternal grandparents, at a Quit India protest in 1942. At the meeting, the protesters are charged by a notoriously cruel English soldier on an enormous horse, and the two young people meet in the ensuing melee. Despite incredible attention to detail in her imagining of this piece of family history, there are at least two essential things wrong with Para's recreation. As Para puts it: "It's from the fucking *horse*'s point of view" (LJL 185). It is perhaps ironically appropriate that Para can only visualize this important event in her family history through the eyes of the participant whose perspective is most inaccessible. The other problem is that Para is unable to arrange the scenario such that two of its crucial players, her grandfather and Green, the army officer, both remain alive. The survival of both characters is central to the family history, and thus to Para's eventual birth. Though the reader and Para both have access, albeit limited, to the story, which is told by Paresh for the computer, it proves impossible to tell.

While, compared with human storytellers, Megalopolis 3000 proves incapable of reproducing a seemingly simple linear narrative, it is eerily adept at quantifying and controlling factors that, by their very nature, are more elusive. In particular, Para is able to program the game such that the outcome of any given scenario is affected by the degree to which its participants put their faith in Krishna. Indeed, players may turn the "Krishna factor" up or down, using a linear numerical scale. Thus, in the world of Megalopolis 3000, religious faith becomes mechanized, while romance and reproduction become impossible.

It is not only the workings of the game itself that prove troubling. The effect of the game on its players is also alarming. Though Megalopolis 3000 is intended to lead Para away from an obsession with military conflict, her investigations into familial and Indian history lead her down a no less destructive—and violent—path. Para's ultimate decision to join the Indian Air Force and thus transform herself into a weapon of war, and her simultaneous donning of a national uniform, seems to her to be the logical extension of what her grandparents did during the 1940s (LJL 282). Even from the horse's point of view, the violence of their original meeting is clear; nonviolence thus disappears for Para from the legacy of the Congress and

its nationalist movement. Paresh himself becomes obsessed with replaying earlier encounters, usually related to his fractured relationships with his mother (now dead) and his ex-wife. For him, the multiple possibilities inherent in the narration of history promote an obsessive and self-destructive focus on the past that makes him less able to confront the present and nurture relationships with those—such as his daughter and his ex-wife, Anna—who still remain.

The national political ramifications of the uncertainty of the past are elucidated more explicitly in the novel's recounting of the story of Bose, whose influence the young Paresh is initially not able to articulate. Two incidents related to Bose's life are recurrent subjects in the novel. The existing uncertainty over Bose's fate forms a central nexus of historical interrogation in *The Last Jet-Engine Laugh.* It is a fact that there are no official documents that confirm the time, location, or cause of Bose's death, although until recently the bulk of the conflicting anecdotal evidence suggested he died after being badly burned in a plane crash in Taipei in the final days of the Second World War. A recent six-year judicial investigation conducted in India, however, disputes this claim.[16] One of the novel's characters, however, claims to have met the dying nationalist in a Soviet gulag many years later. Kalidas, a good friend of Paresh's father and a surrogate father to Paresh himself, maintains throughout the novel that as a young man and sailor he was taken prisoner by the Soviet Union, transported to a gulag, and forced to translate the dying and, possibly, senile words of the once-heroic Bose. He has never reported this story to the authorities, but seems to enjoy recounting it to his circle of friends and admirers.

Kalidas thus advances himself as a unique repository of information about the past, which is potentially of national import. In Kalidas's account, he feels an instinctive need to protect both himself and the old nationalist, which he effectively does by eliminating the political implications from Bose's dying words. Thus, Gandhi becomes "father" and Nehru "priest" in Bose's renderings of their common eponyms, Bapu and Pandit. Kalidas thus moves Bose's discourse from the dangerous realm of politics into the spheres of family and religion (LJL 130). His supposed special knowledge of Bose, however, is not the only evidence of his nationalist credentials. Kalidas is also imprisoned during Indira Gandhi's Emergency and is consistently associated with both political and personal morality. An idealist, Kalidas tries to teach Paresh how to distinguish worthy political causes—the political from the merely personal. Yet the overlap of these categories, so much in evidence in his encounter with Bose, also combines to make Kalidas marginal to the space of the nation—associated with a past that is also passé, his stories become the subject of folklore and comedy. What he sees

clearly, however, is that "Subhash Bose has survived in many ways for longer than Nehru etcetera" (LJL 324).

Bose's death, as uncertain and undocumented, is the subject of endless speculation and offers not so much the possibility of developing multiple or alternative histories as the final impossibility of knowing anything about the past or, for that matter, the present. Indeed, as both the judicial inquiry (which concluded in 2006, more than sixty years after Bose's supposed death) and the extensive media coverage it received demonstrate, Bose's death is a subject of ongoing interest and speculation for Indians. It is now believed that the remains that had previously been identified as Bose's were determined to belong to someone else. Yet the commission was equally unable to offer any positive evidence concerning Bose's fate. The theory that he had somehow traveled to the Soviet Union was given support, but the evidence is still anecdotal at best; no account was offered as to how or when this journey might have been undertaken, nor what cause of death met him there. The conduct of the inquiry, though not a scientific experiment in the traditional sense, implicitly invoked scientific discourse and modes of knowledge, since it purported to engage in a systematic collection and evaluation of evidence in the pursuit of absolute truth. In its instigation of the analysis of bodily remains, the inquiry made overt its dependence on the technologies of science as well as its discourse. Bose's legacy, then, continues to expose the uneasy place of scientific rationalism in contemporary political life. Despite the inconclusiveness of the inquiry, first commissioned by the BJP government in 1999, the current government has still rejected the findings, suggesting that today's Congress party may have as much invested in constructing Bose's legacy as that of the 1940s.

A second story about Bose with which the novel is preoccupied is, as far as I can discern, entirely apocryphal. In it, Bose is asked at an interview for a post in the Indian Civil Service to pass himself through a tiny gold ring. After only a brief pause, Bose is said to have written his name on a piece of paper, rolled up the document, and passed it through the ring (LJL 12). This response is said to have immediately terminated the interview in Bose's favor. While the story is advanced as an example of lateral, if desperate, thinking, one that, at the close of the book, inspires Para as she attempts a difficult escape from her badly damaged space station, according to Paresh it is also something else: "the finest illustration of the matching stupidity and vacuousness of the British and Anglophile Bengalis who ruled under them."

This statement may appear to dismiss the story, and with it Bose's importance to India and its history, but the tale is nevertheless one that is evoked repeatedly in the next three hundred pages. In its conjoining of the

impossible and the inane, and its acceptance of the absoluteness of language, the story of the gold ring performs a number of functions. The story demonstrates Bose's mythic potential—he could have enjoyed the fruits of association with the Raj (despite the Indian Civil Service's general desire to exclude Indians) but, having beat the British at their own game, chooses not to. This narrative pattern of privilege earned and refused is a familiar feature of a hero's construction. Bose did in fact choose not to join the Indian Civil Service; he was successful in his initial examination, but declined to continue the assessment process (some scholars have speculated that his horsemanship may not have been up to the required standard) and, by his own account, never progressed to the interview stage.[17]

The symbolism of the gold ring in and of itself, in Tolkienesque fashion, evokes the corruptible and corrupting nature of power. Bose is asked to shape his very being for the acquisition and exercise of colonial power. Yet he also remains flexible—presumably, the piece of paper bearing Bose's name can pass both ways. The story also demonstrates the absolute capacity of Indian nationalism and the Indian self to fill any role and fit into any space, a flexibility that, in this novel, proves dangerous. And the obsessive recounting of the story points to the capacity of history and myth (as in many postcolonial novels, there is no clear line between the two) to be endlessly appropriated and reconfigured to any purpose.

Certainly, the ideological flexibility that enabled Bose to align himself with Japan, Italy, and Germany during the Second World War, only to seemingly switch his allegiance to the Soviet Union in the war's dying days, both challenges any attempt at historicizing him and, in his own time, unsettled his political opponents. Yet, as he makes clear in *The Indian Struggle 1920–1942,* Bose is fully capable of identifying and critiquing the ideological compromises made by other nationalists. Indeed, Nehru, as discussed in chapter 1, was highly inconsistent in many respects. Gandhi, similarly, though he could appear extraordinarily inflexible on certain points—as evident from his insistence on calling off civil disobedience in 1922—was also a nonsystemic thinker who advanced himself as a moral center, refusing to justify himself to others via logical argument, an approach that his colleagues, especially Bose, often found extremely frustrating. Bose regarded Gandhi's centralizing tendencies as antidemocratic and the willingness of Congress officials to take political office despite making little headway on issues of significance to the populace at large as evidence of their lust for power (a critique that the Muslim League would make later).[18]

Bose's own language, particularly with respect to unity and diversity, which parallels Nehru's but differs in subtle, yet important, ways, offers a

useful locus for exploring the vexed nature of nationalist linguistic lability.[19] Like *The Discovery of India, The Indian Struggle 1920–1942* includes a potted account of Indian history, beginning in roughly 3000 BC. Bose's discussion of the past is far more condensed than Nehru's, however, and his account of the events of the 1920s and 1930s is strictly chronological rather than thematic. Like Nehru, Bose begins by invoking European authority to assert India's national credentials. Quoting Vincent A. Smith, Bose maintains that:

> India beyond all doubt possesses a deep underlying fundamental unity, far more profound than that produced either by geographical isolation or political suzerainty. That unity transcends the innumerable diversities of blood, colour, dress, language, manners and sect.[20]

In Bose's own words, "[t]he ethnic diversity of India has never been a problem." Like Nehru, then, Bose seems to posit an Indian civilizational ethos, seeing unity in India's diversity.

Unlike Nehru, however, Bose is unequivocal in defining a religious, rather than a secular, underlying unity, stating that the "[t]he most important cementing factor has been the Hindu religion." For Hindus, Bose reminds us, India is a "holy land." While no mention is made of Muslims, Christians, or Jews in this section of the chapter, their exclusion from authentic Indianness for Bose is clear; for members of these religions, the designation "holy land" lies in the Middle East. Other religions originating in India, such as Sikhism, Buddhism, and Jainism, and their relationship to the land are not discussed. The relationship with the geography of the nation is thus necessarily different and, by implication, more primary for Hindus than for other Indians. Yet Bose's account of the arrival of Islam on the subcontinent is very similar to Nehru's. Bose states that a "new synthesis was gradually worked out . . . [Muslims] made India their home and shared in the common social life of the people."[21] Akbar is given particular credit for this achievement of synthesis.[22] Discord arrives with the British, who are not prepared to assimilate and become too involved in local affairs. While democracy is shown to be indigenous to the subcontinent, it is associated directly with cultural homogeneity and with the pre-Islamic period. While Nehru saw an essential political anachronism as the reason for the failure of the 1857 revolt, Bose blames a lack of Sikh support.[23] In his focused discussion of the era between 1920 and 1942, Bose repeatedly laments the failure to come to an arrangement that would permanently settle the communal problem.[24] Though not a communalist, Bose is perhaps more willing to frame his understanding of India in communal terms, accepting the

terms of reference that Nehru himself was at pains to reject. As an instrumentalist rather than an idealist, perhaps more than Gandhi or Nehru, Bose's legacy is particularly suitable for exploration within the generic conventions of science fiction.

Dystopic States

The social and political climate of the novel's present is dominated by a shortage of potable water, which has provoked a war between India and a Pakistani-Saudi Arabian alliance backed by the United States. Both the conflict and the political alignments of those engaged in it seem so utterly realistic in the context of current environmental crises and the realities of the war on terror that the novel would seem to evoke the common belief, expressed by Neta C. Crawford, that "world politics is already a science fiction dystopia" and "that the clear distinction between science fiction and our present world has dissolved altogether."[25] In this, she echoes Donna Harraway's assertion that all humans are already cyborgs, a statement that resonates with the mechanization of body functions—eating, washing, excreting—in *The Last Jet-Engine Laugh.*[26] The dangerous pollution of the water supply means that all these activities can only be undertaken with the help of technological intervention, such as specially designed and packaged water substitutes for hydration, and a machine designed to shield all body orifices from water during bathing, whose workings are described in detail in the novel.

I use the category dystopic to describe the narrative project of *The Last Jet-Engine Laugh,* rather than the concept of Kaliyug, whose origins are in Hindu, rather than Western, thought for a number of reasons.[27] Kaliyug, the age of Kali, is characterized in the Vishnu Purana by the absence of virtuous conduct, materialism, political corruption, the erasure of moral distinctions, and, ultimately, the destruction of humanity.[28] In this it may appear similar to any number of other millennial myths that appear elsewhere. According to some versions of Hindu mythology, Kaliyug is the era in which we currently live, and in which humanity has persisted for approximately the last five thousand years. As Kaliyug is said to last approximately four hundred thousand years, no improvement is to be expected in the human condition during the foreseeable future.

In other respects, Kaliyug is more complex. Kali, as a deity, often appears as the incarnation of another female deity's wrath and also rouses Shiva's destructive and sexual capacities. But her rage is also directed at ignorance; she thus helps maintain world order and directs spiritual seekers toward a true understanding of the divine. The worship of Kali seeks simultaneously

to celebrate and contain the powerful and potentially destructive forces she represents.[29] This inherent tension means that the concept of Kaliyug does not offer a singular model for living in a less than ideal world, nor does it deny the possibility of attempting to confront moral, political, or environmental threats. While the sheer length and inescapability of the cycle may suggest, at least in theory, a resignation to the inevitability and inescapability of living in a fallen world, the many rituals and myths that suggest the possibility of placating Kali and even the necessity of curbing her potentially violent influence make it clear that the religious and philosophical response to Kaliyug is complex and sometimes resistant. As such, the concept of dystopia overlaps with that of Kaliyug in some, but not all, of its versions.[30]

There is another important reason why dystopia offers a useful locus for thinking about this particular novel. Nationalism, much like science, holds out a teleological narrative in which the attainment, first of the nation-state and then of its development, will lead to both personal and community improvement. The unstated end of such narratives is always a utopian future in which the ills of the present have been effectively annihilated or contained. In reality, the inherent limitations of nationalism are often widely visible and, in many postcolonial nations, including India, disenchantment with nationalism and the nation-state arrived almost immediately upon the attainment of independence. Insofar as *The Last Jet-Engine Laugh* engages explicitly with the specificities of Indian nationalism (more so, I would argue, than with a Hindu mythological framework), dystopia offers a touchstone for the nation's (ostensibly) secular politics.

Nevertheless, mythic imagery of the destructive mother is central to this novel as it was to Bose. Bose, like Nehru, seems to have envisioned India's unity in diversity contained in the figure of Bharat Mata, or Mother India. For Nehru she is a somewhat troubled, but essentially nonviolent, figure—an agrarian goddess who indoctrinates the peasants into the space of the nation, a "lady with a past" (DI 563). In Bose's case she is incarnated in the form of Kali, a fact that makes Joshi's linking of him with dystopia particularly appropriate. In his 1925 article, "The Call of the Motherland," the terms "nation" and "Kali" are used almost synonymously. He imagines the motherland taking up arms in a series of letters written in 1927, and in 1928 begins referring to India as "Mother Durga."[31] One of Bose's biographers, Leonard A. Gordon, relates a story in which Bose, campaigning for the Congress party in 1929—the party from which he would later flee to work for the liberation of India through armed struggle—sought to demonstrate his fearlessness to his traveling companions by singing the following

song while crossing a dangerous river that had recently claimed the life of the child of one of the party:

> When will you dance again, oh Mother Shyama
> Making the garland of skulls around your neck move
> Through the darkness of the clouds
> The scimitar in your hand flashes like a flame.
> Oh mother! By the fire of your three eyes
> Reduce to ashes all the impurities of the mind,
> And I will never be afraid of the terrible.
> Oh Mother Kali! Give me your mantra of the fearless.[32]

This desire to embrace purity, violence, and fearlessness was to punctuate Bose's later political career, which saw him spread propaganda for Nazi Germany, whose emphasis on Aryan superiority coincided, at least to an extent, with his vision of Indian nationalist identity. Bose's interest in purity is also evocative of Bankim Chandra Chatterji's nationalist novel *Anandamath,* in which armed fighters dedicate themselves to Mother India and to the abandonment of worldly concerns, including family ties.

This willingness to call forth the terrible, and the belief in the need to go to extreme lengths in dark times, is, of course, diametrically opposed to Gandhi's version of nationalism. Gandhi famously called off national civil disobedience in 1922 because of an isolated incident of violence in Chauri-Chaura, a decision for which he was roundly criticized by Bose in *The Indian Struggle 1920–1942.*[33] For Gandhi, the femininity of the nation coincided with submission to all punishment; any sacrifice that might be necessary to bring about the nation should be one's own, not one's opponent's, hence Gandhi's repeated the threat to fast unto death should his demands not be met.

In Bose's account of the nationalist period, *The Indian Struggle 1920–1942,* the figure of the mother is far less prominent than in Nehru's—those references he does make are, however, highly suggestive. In recounting his experience of imprisonment in Burma, Bose narrates how he, along with other inmates, struggled to celebrate Durga Puja, which he calls "our national religious festival."[34] The celebrants are not identified, and given that Bose has just been discussing the Burmese prisoners he has encountered, their culture, and tradition, the passage is particularly ambiguous; Durga Puja is not a Buddhist festival (Buddhism is the predominant religion in Burma). It is, in fact, a festival with particular significance in Bengal, and thus, for Bose, the nation seems to be defined not subcontinentally, as for Nehru, but regionally. The synecdochic relationship between Bengal and India is, as we have seen, also evident in the work of other artists, such as Abanindranath Tagore.

In *The Last Jet-Engine Laugh,* the vision of the destructive mother, encapsulated in the song Bose addressed to Shyama, has its logical end in the insidious technology and dehumanizing capitalism of the novel's dystopic world. Actual mothers are mostly absent in the novel. Paresh's ex-wife (Para's mother), Anna, haunts, rather than appears in, the novel. Indeed, the only image we are offered of Anna is a photograph of her as Durga (LJL 193). Similarly, as Paresh's parents' marriage begins to deteriorate, his father ceases photographing his mother, and she gradually fades from the family archive.

In 2030, the novel's present tense, the Durga Puja has retained its centrality to Bengali life, but has changed radically in form and content. The celebration of Durga (one of Kali's avatars) is now coordinated by Japanese corporations, sponsored by appliance manufacturers, and directed by roving gangs who extort protection money from the local inhabitants to fund the celebrations (LJL 110). Mother Bengal has thus been thoroughly commercialized and deindigenized and is also associated with the threat of violence and criminality. Though no explicit connection is made, there are echoes in this scene of contemporary appropriations of Kali as an agent of Hindu fundamentalism by politicians such as Uma Bharti.[35] Durga's likeness is also painted on the exterior of the fighter planes that Para and the other members of her squadron use to bomb targets in Pakistan. As such, the goddess is associated both with destructive technologies and with the insidious entrance of women and the feminine into new and more brutal realms of warfare. The all-female squadron Para leads is formed by the air force because women are found, owing to their biological difference, to be better able to withstand certain extreme conditions encountered by fighter pilots as well as being more resistant to the latest weaponry deployed by the Pakistani-Saudi-American alliance. Women's bodies are thus being co-opted for the war, while the high command, at least as Para encounters it, is still male dominated. In at least one important respect, the women Para leads resemble the women whom Gandhi first envisioned as satyagrahis, who were to work for the nation to the exclusion of their personal lives; they, much like the women who form the nationalist brigade in Raja Rao's *Kanthapura,* submit their bodies to the cause of the nation and endure the punishment that accompanies this sacrifice.

A World Without 'Isms'

The critique of power in this novel is less direct than in the work of Rushdie, Vikram Seth, or Nayantara Sahgal. While these three authors make explicit reference to the oppressive workings of the state—whether manifest

through the demolition of slums in *Midnight's Children,* the seizure of Muslim property in *A Suitable Boy,* or the firing of a noncompliant civil servant in *Rich Like Us*—the state remains elusive in *The Last Jet-Engine Laugh.* Beyond the arrest of Kalidas and the attendance, by Paresh's father, at a single meeting of the progressive writers' association, the politics of the nation receive relatively little attention. Nor do class and caste structures, central to *A God of Small Things* and *The Sari Shop,* feature prominently. None of the characters in the novel's present is expressly involved in politics. While Paresh's parents were both members of the Indian National Congress and nationalist activists, that loyalty to the nation does not seem to influence Paresh much—he returns to India after a long absence for personal, not political, reasons. Indeed, given the close allegorical relationship between the rise of the nation and the development of his parents' love, the decay of that romantic relationship suggests an analogous disenchantment with the nation.

Though his fame rests on photographs of overtly political events, such as antiwar demonstrations, Paresh's art functions to aestheticize the performance of dissent, thereby displacing direct action into the realm of the sublime. For instance, the photograph that Paresh counts among his best work and describes in detail depicts an antinuclear protestor, taken in Delhi during the late 1990s. In the photograph,

> you can't even see her face properly, she is in silhouette, back almost fully to the camera, looking left. There is a hint of an eye as she holds up her placard and you can't read what it says, but there is an energy in her shoulders. Beyond her is a DTC bus passing with a row of people poking their heads out of the windows, staring at the woman as if she is from outer space. What happens, because of the angle, is that the row of heads seems to be coming out of both sides of the woman's own head, like some strange black and white reverse-Ravan.
>
> (LJL 57)

In the photograph, neither the identity of the woman nor the cause she supports (communicated via the placard) is visible. Rather than documenting the woman's politics, Paresh's photograph erases it. Indeed, she takes on a mythical, demonic guise (as Ravan). Paresh was originally attracted to this particular woman as a photographic subject because she stood apart from the other protesters, perhaps, according to Paresh, because of her class difference (LJL 56). The nature of this class difference is not fully explained, but the novel does provide a few hints: the unnamed woman has dark skin and Paresh believes she is from Rajasthan or Madhya Pradesh, she also sports "a big red bindi on her forehead, smudged slightly by sweat." The

other protesters are not described, but the description implies that they are light-skinned, urban, and well dressed by contrast. Nuclear proliferation is not, it seems, a subaltern issue. Beyond this assertion, however, there is no engagement with the politics of subalternity. Paresh calls the photo a "cheap trick" but also cites it as one of the few things that keeps him from suicide.

Similarly, Para's decision to join the Indian Air Force during a time of war does not seem to be linked to any particular attitude toward the Indian nation or its supposed enemies—Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United States. She sees her command as a unique career opportunity. Even after her first mission leaves her somewhat shaken, Para writes to her father: "I didn't want to go to Pakistan, I wanted to go to *Pakistan!* . . . It's just a job like any other. Yeah, right" (LJL 48). The use of different typefaces to signal the distance between the place and the symbol, and Para's uncertain disclaimer of her own neutrality signal the uneasiness of her political self-positioning. Indeed, so normalized has the idea of Pakistan's degradation become, in this novel, that the name of that nation is the preferred children's term for toilet (LJL 42).

When a colleague, Cindy, is killed during the very first mission under her command, Para accepts with little difficulty her superiors' claims that Cindy's death was necessary and inevitable. Raksha's last-minute inability to carry out the attack plan remains coded as unreadable, because any attempt to interpret her behavior threatens to introduce complex moral dilemmas regarding the war and the women's role in it, neither of which is ever fully explained (LJL 218). Though Para is aware that her hybrid origins may make her ineligible to join the air force, she does not view this as an ethical problem and is proud of her decision to use forgery in order to deceive the recruiters. Even the act of enlisting in the air force has required Para to erase her own hybrid identity, obliterating her mother's name and German origins from her birth certificate. Para's mother Anna must become Annapurna, and her last name, Lang, indicative of the autonomy of her identity in the context of marriage, is erased altogether. According to Paresh, Para will one day also be the victim of the "demon buffalo" (LJL 107). In Hindu mythology, Mahisha (or Mahishasuramardini) is a demon buffalo slain by Durga. As such he expects Para to become the victim of the military industrial complex in which she participates and that, as we have seen, Durga has come in this imagined future to represent. In this, she is like the woman in his favorite photograph who comes to symbolize the demons she protests.

Indeed, the characters' lack of awareness and culpability with respect to their involvement in politics fits with the narrative's suspicion of cause and

effect. All political ideologies invoke an ordered world in which current social conditions can be explained and future ones purposefully arranged. Nehru's insistence, for example, that Muslim separatism was the result of the socioeconomic disadvantage experienced by the communities in question, despite evidence to the contrary, was consistent with his own socialist, secular beliefs. Nehru's explanation of communalism demonstrates the curious way in which political ideologies embrace causal narratives even at the expense, ironically, of the very forms of rationality they advocate. Bose's belief in the need to prioritize the achievement of Indian independence over political or ideological consistency (as evidenced from his shifting allegiances during, and possibly after, Second World War), on the other hand, suggests a world view based on a series of absolute, but nonsystematic, principles. Indian independence was, in the symbolic terms of the novel, Bose's golden ring.

Paresh does not recite the story of Bose's exams with any enthusiasm. This suspicion of slippery signifiers positions Paresh as implicitly Nehruvian, even as Nehru is marginalized within the world of the novel, much like Paresh himself. As *The Last Jet-Engine Laugh* opens, Paresh's days of fame are behind him, and he lives as a virtual hermit. It is in the points of contact between the two thinkers that the uneasy doubleness of this heritage is most marked. Indeed, Nehru seems to offer relatively little for this brave new world. For Para Bhatt, online gaming champion, the Nehruvian aesthetic—in the form of the paintings of the Bombay progressive artists—is a virtual casualty on her way to military dominance. As a child, she had clinched her world title in online computer gaming by engaging in an imaginary battle set in the skies of future Bombay. In the course of the battle, she destroys the art gallery, including all the work of those artists whose syncretism forms the basis for the art depicted in Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh.* Paresh, her father, the only one who understands the significance of this loss, must sit mutely by because the game's rules of engagement do not allow Para to communicate with anyone while she is playing. This silence is typical. He is generally poorly equipped to articulate the national inheritance, and his most eloquent statements, as we have seen, are his dangerously aestheticized photographs.

To a significant extent, Paresh is able to live the privileged life of a globalized, cosmopolitan subject who can move unproblematically between national spaces and whose status as artist outweighs any affiliation with race, religion, caste, or class. Nevertheless, the scenes in which Paresh does come face-to-face with oppressive power structures are pivotal. When the French police surround his car and hold Para and Paresh at rifle point, mistaking Paresh for an Arab terrorist, he feels he has no choice but to

reassure his daughter that it is nothing, that all is right with the world, denying the brutality of racial profiling, which is elsewhere made explicit. Indeed, Paresh watches a man of African descent cover his face with a white mask as he exits the subway in Paris; in a casual aside the reader learns that it has become difficult for non-Whites to use public transport (LJL 334). In this unexpected confrontation with the French police, Paresh's own life is only spared because of the presence of Para, his European daughter, in the front seat. How such extreme fears of non-Europeans come into being is never explained, but that very lack of rationalization and the total disengagement of Paresh's experience from any larger narrative serve to highlight the irrationality and terror such fears engender. Indeed, Paresh's attempts to explain these events to his daughter are arguably a mistake, because they seem to contain and, thus, condone the state's actions. There are some forms of brutality that he cannot protect her from; in his attempt to do so he may well do her a disservice.

Despite the fact that this is not a novel driven by intricate political analysis, the very absence of such analysis is highlighted in provocative ways. For instance, the personal hygiene problems created by the shortage and contamination of water, together with the lamentable absence of acceptable-tasting beverages and the technical innovations designed to address these irritations, receive far greater attention than the origins of the problem itself, which is only ever alluded to in the vaguest possible terms, encoded in place names such as "New York" or unidentifiable objects such as "the Device." Instead, the fragmentary, nonlogical approach to India's political and environmental conundrum evokes a fundamental problem. To quote Geoffrey Whitehall:

> The question most important for International Relations theory and modern explorations of the political is how the boundary between the world and the beyond, between what is sensible and non-sense, and between what can be known and unknown is to be managed, secured and disciplined.[36]

This total refusal of logic—whether mathematical or magical—and even of the dialectic that makes it possible to distinguish sense from nonsense is at the center of *The Last Jet-Engine Laugh.* The focus on non-sense functions on a number of levels. Joshi steadfastly refuses to answer any of the plot-based questions that he sets up for the reader. How has this water crisis arisen? Why is Paresh living in seclusion? Will Para succeed in escaping from her doomed spacecraft? Will her father receive her farewell message? On a structural level, many of the chapters are titled after dates, both in the past, during the 1980s, and in the novel's twenty-first-century present, the latter

covering roughly five months. None of these dates are ever shown to have any kind of significance, and their ordering seems arbitrary. Indeed, Joshi is in the habit of shifting seamlessly between perspectives and timeframes. The novel is also divided into books, the first three of which contain multiple chapters. Each begins with two epigraphs—one from a popular Western rock song and another from an Indian source (Bengali folk music, Hindu mythology, and Rabindranath Tagore, among others). These allusive fragments form part of the novel's insistent alogic. Kate Drake, in her review of *The Last Jet-Engine Laugh,* claims it "reads more like a photo montage than a narrative."[37] In the novel, all distinctions ultimately collapse—including those between life and death, past and present, and between individual subjects—a dissolution that is also evident at the level of form.

In the essay quoted earlier, Whitehall goes on to argue that on an aesthetic level, such uncertainty and liminality are most easily captured in the notion of the sublime. In Edmund Burke's seminal writings on the subject, the sublime is associated with terror evoked by one of the two major passions: self-preservation.[38] The passion of self-preservation is aroused for Burke by any number of stimuli: very large objects, darkness (he makes particular mention of Black bodies), and the infinite. While Burke seeks (easily discredited) scientific/biological explanations for all these sublime provocations, a psychoanalytic approach provides a ready, simpler explanation. Sigmund Freud's division of the unconscious into the ego and id echoes Burke's passions of self-preservation and society (which for Burke is encapsulated in sexual desire and pleasure).[39] Each of the triggers Burke identifies can be associated with the unknown, the Other, and thus, perhaps, a certain lack of control over the destiny of the self. Arguably, the future epitomizes such unknown and is the very terrain of struggle for self-preservation. Since the concept of postcolonial dystopia refutes any possibility of controlling the future (its genealogy cannot be known or rationalized), the sublime would seem to emerge as its logical aesthetic.

In *The Last Jet-Engine Laugh,* the sublime makes its presence felt via the work or, paradoxically, absence of work, by Paresh, who has been a famous photographer. Appropriately, the photographs that interest him most are those he does not have, which have been lost, for reasons unknown, during the course of time. The stories that seem to haunt Paresh most profoundly are, likewise, the stories of the photographs not taken. When Paresh comes face-to-face with the severity of Calcutta's water problem, in the form of a violent melee that threatens the life of a colleague, we are told he "has no memory of taking the camera off his neck and no memory of wrapping the strap tight around his wrist. There is just a bit of slack so that the camera

can swing" (LJL 279). The reader has already learned that the extent of the crisis in Calcutta is not known in the West, where Paresh has been living, and so just for a moment the reader may believe that she is about to witness the creation of the edgy photojournalism for which Paresh is allegedly famous. Instead, Paresh uses his camera as a weapon to attack his friend's assailant, destroying the camera and film in the process. Art, it seems, is ever inadequate in a crisis.

It is my contention that this novel blends postmodern narrative strategies with the conventions of science fiction in a way that rejects both binary terms of postcolonial discourse and the celebration of plurality that is so often a feature of magical realism. There is no self/other binary here, nor is there any generative multiplicity. There are no alternative ways of knowing which liberate reader or character from oppressive Western dialectics. History, rather than being a subject of revision, whose recasting offers a challenge to scientific discourse, is inescapably mechanized and thus essentially unavailable in *The Last Jet-Engine Laugh.*

As Pordzik points out, there is always a "colonizing gesture implied in the process of installing a new political and social system."[40] Nationalism, in any form, is an inherently utopic discourse and thus necessarily contains the seeds of dystopia as well. Bose and his Indian National Army may well represent that inheritance that the Congress party, and the nation, has been trying so hard to repress. Bose's history is evocative of how similar nationalism and colonialism actually are. Indeed, in *The Last Jet-Engine Laugh,* the Calcutta of the future has fractured into "colonies," protected by barbed wire, which compete with each other for the acquisition of limited water resources via murderous vigilante groups dubbed "colony gangs," whose principal distinguishing physical feature is a propensity for sporting the paraphernalia of various American Ivy League universities. Elite education, capitalism, and colonialism are thus crudely aligned. The most privileged of Calcutta's residents live in the transparently named "power colony." The city, though still a destination for migrants, is no longer a space of cosmopolitanism, having had its distinctive culture erased by the homogenizing power of global corporations. Indeed, cosmopolitanism in the novel is reduced to the commingling of the sewage from different parts of Calcutta and the production of an effluent stream to which members of all ethnic groups, religions, classes, and castes can contribute (LJL 123). The ever-abundance of human waste stands in stark contrast to the unequal availability of clean water.

As such, the dystopian future that Joshi envisions is both highly fatalistic and powerfully subversive. This world where Bose has won, beating out both Gandhi and Nehru (LJL 324), is readily recognizable as proximate to

our present and provides no clues about how the problems depicted may be avoided or confronted. Though Paresh and Para live in continuous awareness of the presence of others, there is no meaningful human community. The fates of the individual, the city, and the nation, like that of Bose, are thus all doomed to remain unknown. Indeed, the very name India is contained within quotation marks (LJL 61). Escape, survival, is just a matter of chance.

CHAPTER 7

Unity in Diversity Beyond the Nation-State in Rupa Bajwa's *The Sari Shop*

Rupa Bajwa's debut novel, *The Sari Shop* (2004), is set in Amritsar and tracks the emotional and intellectual career of Ramchand, a salesperson in a sari shop, who lacks both family and close friends and seems to be plagued by a vague feeling of existential discomfort, which, I will argue, takes on a distinctively nationalist dimension. His life is initially composed of work, and simple pleasures such as watching popular Hindi films, eating with colleagues at a local food stall, and fantasizing about his landlord's wife. This seemingly straightforward existence is disrupted by an unexpected job assignment that requires him to visit the home of a wealthy client, Rina Kapoor. This entry into the bourgeois private sphere brings to his attention a whole range of elitist national cultural practices—from speaking English, to engaging in creative writing—which have hitherto occupied positions of relatively minor importance in his own life. The experience reminds him of his earlier, marginalized aspirations to enter this very sphere himself. Perhaps, more significantly, however, the Kapoor home is also where Ramchand comes to realize that his status as an Indian—a national subject—is also open to question.

The Sari Shop centers on the intimate and the domestic; both its content and the realism and concision of the prose suggest that this novel is not one of the "baggy monsters" so often associated with interrogations of the Indian nation. Yet the novel's critical reception has had an overtly nationalist tone, with Manil Suri, himself the author of an acclaimed novel, *The Death of Vishnu* (2001), stating that it "reaches for—and captures—the very soul of India."[1] This is one of the comments that have been reproduced on the book's

cover, not just in North America, where the Norton edition seems to have focused on reading groups, but in India itself. Why does Suri associate this novel with an essentialist reading of Indianness, and what does he imagine to be the nature of India's soul? Indeed, authenticity seems to have proven a particularly troubling issue for readers of this novel. Nilanjana S. Roy, in her review, complains that both Bajwa and Suri "appropriate the lives of people whom they do not understand . . . they are at a remove from their subjects."[2] Amardeep Singh responds:

> Yes, that's true about Bajwa and Suri . . . They *are* at some distance from their subjects. In Rupa Bajwa's *The Sari Shop,* it's a real problem—one senses she has more in common with the wealthy clients in the novel than with the lower middle-class sari seller who is her protagonist . . . But it's also true of every preceding generation of Indian writers, especially those who have tried to represent the perspectives of non-elite Indians.[3]

While *The Sari Shop* is not, in any straightforward sense, a nationalist novel—the characters all occupy a peripheral position with respect to the geography, culture, politics, and economics of the nation-state—it is one that wrestles with a "national" problem, namely, the position of the subaltern vis-à-vis the nation.

Singh is right to point out that Bajwa's novel is merely a relatively recent installment in a tradition of attempting to incorporate the subaltern into the nation via textual representation. Given that national literatures are, by definition, not written by subaltern subjects, and that there are obvious problems in attempting to speak for the subaltern, the question that remains is whether it is possible to speak of the subaltern in a way that does not participate in the same process of erasure that refusing to speak of the subaltern would entail. In this final chapter, I return, once again, to Nehru's *The Discovery of India* in order to consider the place of the subaltern within the nation. In a sense, Nehru epitomizes the dilemma that both Roy and Singh discuss—as an individual, he could hardly have been less representative of India's lower classes, but as a writer and politician, he was unusually sympathetic to their plight and, occasionally, even radical in his appreciation of their history and potential. In this chapter, I wish to delineate the ways in which Bajwa both writes herself into, and critiques, a distinctively Nehruvian vision of the nation. In particular, her self-ironizing participation in the ongoing struggle to write the subaltern into a national space tests the limits of unity in diversity as both a nationalist ethos and an aesthetic.

Writing the Subaltern Citizen

If Nehru finally advances any one group as essentially Indian, or as the repository of national values, it is India's peasants. In *The Discovery of India* they provide the "timeless truth of the national culture, uncontaminated by colonial reason," but their culture is only acceptable to the elites in sanitized form.[4] Peasants are thus deeply paradoxical entities in *The Discovery of India.* Though they are romanticized as a site of authentic, uncolonized subjectivity (a status at best minimally problematized by their acknowledged subjugation to colonial institutions), nationalist consciousness requires that they be wrested from this state and assimilated into metropolitan culture. Of course, the peasants are marked by their essential inaccessibility; Nehru's admiration for them is always tinged. In *An Autobiography*, he admits that when he began his political travels in the countryside he "was quite unused to going out in the sun and . . . had gone to the hills for part of every summer." As such, he finds his new task of reaching out to the Indian populace in rural areas arduous and not entirely welcome. Prior to 1920 he had seen peasants but "had not fully realised what they were and what they meant." After this point, he gains some confidence in talking to them; after all how could he "be shy of these poor unsophisticated people?"[5] While the Nehru of *An Autobiography* respects the *kisan*'s capacity for suffering, they are generally portrayed as both intellectually and physically weak.

While Nehru's view of India's subalterns seems to grow both more nuanced and more compassionate with time, there are obvious difficulties in attempting to locate a peasant perspective within *The Discovery of India,* and Nehru himself was aware of this. Though Nehru clearly sympathizes deeply with the peasants' plight and is passionately interested in their welfare, he finds communication with them exceedingly difficult. The peasant is "limited," not sophisticated and not equipped to comprehend the "stronger" intellectual fare that the urban audience demands (DI 59). Nehru takes pains to force the concept of the nation-state into their unwilling heads. Yet he claims that, from the "ancient epics and myths and legends," the subaltern masses are already "familiar with the conception of their country" (DI 60).

The word "their" bespeaks the location of these subjects within the boundaries of the nation-state, but cannot dispel the ambiguity that surrounds it; the "metropolitan anti-imperialist cannot teach the native the proper name of his nation or continent."[6] What and where is the country of the peasants? Nehru himself is not at all certain, and one cannot but sympathize with the peasant he interrogates in an attempt to satisfy his

desire for specificity. Although he advocates the subaltern understanding of identity as in some way necessary for a totalizing definition of the nation, it is by no means sufficient, and Nehru does not feel his task is complete until the peasants recognize themselves *as* Bharat Mata (Mother India)—national subjects. The terms in which his success is measured are rather telling; the eyes of the newly enlightened peasants "light up as if they had made a great *discovery*" (DI 61; my emphasis). The use of the term discovery aligns them with Nehru himself, constructing the quest for India as shared with the peasants, and thus putting the interlocutors on an equal footing. Successful national incorporation of peasant subjectivity, then, entails alignment not only with the indigenous metropolitan elite but also with the larger problematic of colonialism itself.

This tension becomes even more apparent in the section of *The Discovery of India* entitled "The Culture of the Masses." The peasants' status as "illiterate and uneducated" must be reconciled with their extensive awareness of folklore and mythology, as must their connection with an ancient cultural tradition and their physical poverty, "the mark of the beast" (DI 68). Nehru cannot free himself of the standard imperialist and nationalist view of the masses as "homogeneous, acquiescent, uneducated in political action and somewhat helpless."[7] Furthermore, the peasants, as Nehru sees them, are sometimes in danger of becoming anachronisms, who remind him of "some fresco of ancient times" (DI 68). This desire to simultaneously incorporate and repudiate India's peasants is a common theme in nationalist discourse. Indeed, the "appropriation of the popular" as a "repository of natural truth" that is "uncontaminated by colonial reason" was, according to Partha Chatterjee, a key element of the nationalist project.[8]

While this representation is problematic at best, it is important to note that Nehru could also be pleasantly surprised by popular culture and by the village dwellers. He sees "understanding in their eyes" when he speaks of political matters, and is surprised to learn of the vibrancy and sophistication of the oral tradition.[9] Nehru is also humbled by the ability of the rural poor to maintain a sense of dignity in the face of crushing hardship. Earlier works of literature, such as Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* (1970), portrayed subaltern characters in such a way as to underline the enforced social disabilities that can accrue to individuals as a result of membership in a particular caste or class. Nehru's subalterns, on the other hand, are far more ambiguous and, thus, are not easily defined either by social circumstances or by a liberal individualist model of citizenship emphasizing personal freedom and choice. Furthermore, Nehru is self-conscious about his own inescapable, but unacceptable, uneasiness in their presence.

Nehru entertained continual doubts about the text he had produced:

> Looking back at what I have written, it seems inadequate, disjointed and lacking in unity, a mixture of many things, with the personal element dominant and giving its colour even to what was intended to be an objective record and analysis. That personal element has pushed itself forward almost against my will; often I checked it and held it back but sometimes I loosened the reins and allowed it to flow out of my pen, and mirror, to some extent, my mind. (DI 479)

On one level Nehru wishes his narrative to be objective and unified; on another he recognizes the undesirability, and even futility, of attempting to write such a text. He also wants, at least on some level, to write a personal account. In this, Nehru and Bajwa are similar. The problem of Bajwa's position as an author (educated and English-speaking) attempting to write about subaltern characters is textualized in *The Sari Shop* itself. Within the novel, the upper-class Rina Kapoor gains both financial and cultural capital from the publication of a book of fiction about a sari shop salesman. The inspiration for this character is none other than Ramchand, the main character in *The Sari Shop,* whose world Rina has inadvertently disrupted and exploited. Rina's self-absorption—which helps make her a distinctly unsympathetic character—can only be an ironic comment on the relationship between Bajwa and her subject. Bajwa herself acknowledges that "through her I do question my own ability to see and write clearly."[10] The gap between the classes, and the author's inevitable ironic distance, is similarly made clear in a scene in which Ramchand overhears the head of a university English department discussing "post-colonialism and paradigms of poverty," things he assumes he is unable to understand because he "hadn't reached the letter 'p' in his dictionary."[11]

As an individual of Kashmiri Brahmin descent, whose ancestors had served the Mughals, Nehru identified with the elite, hybrid culture of the Mughal courts. He claims both the Urdu language and its literary tradition as his own and as authentically Indian. Nehru thus viewed himself as personally heir to both Muslim and Hindu cultural traditions, both of which he wanted to preserve and perpetuate. In rural communities, no religious group could live hermetically sealed off from the others, and, as such, a certain logic of accommodation was necessarily in play. This practice of adjustment also influenced Nehru profoundly. Yet the models of coexistence offered by the subaltern and elite hybrid cultures were distinct from each other and sometimes even in conflict. Consequently, Nehru was faced with the unenviable task of attempting to synthesize the two.

What is completely neglected in this process, however, is any recognition of the urban subaltern subject. Like Gandhi, he viewed India as an essentially rural society. Yet, arguably, the colonial city already acted as a "domain of shared meanings," which, while it maintained class distinctions, also brought members of different religions, classes, and castes into new spatial, economic, and social relationships.[12] Caught between the courtly and the rural, and seeking to work against the colonial, neither Nehru nor Gandhi acknowledged the potential for a cosmopolitanism of national scope in India's cities. For theorists as well, true subalternity often exists only in the rural environment:

> The gulf between the conscious, agitated and articulate works of young [urban] *dalit* writers and the normally muted voices of rural *dalit* masses cannot be bridged by shrill cries of pain and anger or by clarion-calls to revolution.[13]

In this description, attaining any kind of voice (whether comprehensible to the metropolitan elite or not) involves a radical dissociation from rural subaltern experience, meaning that not only are urban subjects never truly subaltern (regardless of their class or caste origins), but that those who are truly subaltern are never able to speak. The cosmopolitan potential of the city is thus fully discounted, while the dalit subject remains inexorably trapped.

For many years, this blind spot also persisted in fiction. Samares C. Sanyal identifies both the "rural life of India" and "the hybrid culture of the educated Indian middle classes" as defining subjects of the Indian novel in English, but makes no explicit mention of lower-class urban settings.[14] While some, more recent writers have addressed the city as a cosmopolitan space (one need only think of Salman Rushdie's paeans to Bombay, or Vikram Seth's imaginary Brahmpur) and others, such as Rohinton Mistry, have focused on subaltern urban characters, such representations remain relatively scarce and are often unconvincing.[15] Given Germaine Greer's notoriously sharp critique of Mistry, disputing the reality of the poverty he represents, coupled with the inevitable accusations of appropriation, such as those leveled by Nilanjana Roy against Bajwa, it is perhaps not surprising that few writers are willing to take on such subject matter that, usually by definition, takes them away from their personal experience.[16] While the past emphasis by both socially minded writers and politicians on rural spaces likely reflects the fact that, as of 2001, more than two-thirds of Indians lived in rural areas, nearly a third of those who did live in urban areas were defined as poor, and these urban poor composed a quarter

of India's impoverished people.[17] Given that India boasts thirty-five cities with populations of more than a million people, the urban poor constitute a significant, and growing, contingent of the nation.

Though Amritsar is not the stereotypical space of national imaginings in recent Indian fiction in English, it too seems to offer, in *The Sari Shop,* an ideal locus for the emergence of a secular cosmopolitanism compatible with a Nehruvian model of the nation. Though perhaps inscribed in national and transnational memory as the site of the Golden Temple massacre and, thus, a place of religious conflict and state-sanctioned violence, the pervading atmosphere of the city in the novel is a secular one. Only one character is shown to have any sort of religious inclinations and he is also held up as morally questionable. There is no reference in the novel to Sikh separatism, nor to the anti-Sikh sentiment that accompanied it. Neither the background to the military assault ordered by Indira Gandhi in order to flush armed fighters out of the temple, nor the larger political outcome—her assassination by her Sikh bodyguards and subsequent communal rioting throughout India—is mentioned.[18]

Instead, Amritsar is imagined primarily as a place of commerce and residence, where the tumult of life is ever visible on crowded streets. Indeed, in *The Sari Shop,* the Punjab's turbulent history is evident primarily in hidden, deeply personal grief.[19] The city of Amritsar does bear the scars of religious conflict—in the form of the bullet holes that riddle the Golden Temple—but is also home to a diverse set of characters who embrace community across religious lines. Indeed, part of the great tragedy of the Golden Temple massacre for the local population is that it has sacralized a space whose public function was previously fluid. Two young Sikh boys, sons of the owner of a local food stall, happened to be at the Golden Temple on that tragic day because the heat drove them to seek out an outdoor space, and both the temple and the maidan presented equally appealing options. The young boys make clear that, for them, the spaces are equivalent, and the final choice is made based on convenience, not ideological or religious concerns (SS 108).

Individual expressions of prejudice are also actively frowned on by the novel's main characters. Ramchand's colleague Hari may be inspired by Bollywood films demonizing Muslims and Pakistan, but this prejudice does not seem to manifest itself in his relationships with those around him. Furthermore, Ramchand is profoundly offended by his friend's speech and finds the violence and simplistic moralizing of such films objectionable. Religious difference remains primarily in the private sphere, and acts of observance are merely reported on by third parties and never witnessed.

I argue, however, that, despite its secularity, the cosmopolitan space of Bajwa's Amritsar is not emblematic of a universally available Indian national identity. Regardless of whether one accepts Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's argument that the subaltern cannot speak, or prefers Harish Trivedi's retort that the subaltern only appears silent to a hegemonic, English-speaking audience, the location of the subaltern relative to the space of the nation and the nation-state remains contentious.[20] For critics of the nationalist discourse in India, the failure to incorporate subalterns into the nation-state is the key evidence of its inadequacy. Sunil Khilnani's assertion that too many Indians remain outside of the "conversation of democracy" reinforces both the terms of orality laid out by Spivak and Nehru's plea to write for the masses.[21] Ranajit Guha locates the need for subaltern studies in the "*historic failure of the nation to come to its own,*"[22] an assessment shared by G. Aloysius when he points out that "Gandhian political mobilization . . . was not economic interest based" and thus actually created social fixity, ultimately preventing the emergence of the hegemony that, according to Antonio Gramsci, truly defines the nation.[23] Jaidev similarly contends that "nation is imagined while class is real . . . if justice is realized along class lines, the nation will automatically get decolonized."[24] For the subaltern then, the anticolonial struggle is far from over, since the struggle for representation—after all, the essence of colonialism is the denial of self-representation—is ongoing. Thus, the fate of the nation and its associated nation-state arguably hangs on the subaltern's speech or silence.

The problem of subaltern speech is thrown into relief in *The Sari Shop* during Ramchand's first visit to the Kapoor household. While Ramchand waits for his customers to appear, he is served a cold drink by a servant boy, newly arrived from a village near Simla (SS 62). While each seems to sense the other's discomfort, they are at pains to converse, with Ramchand simply asking if the boy is new, and the nameless servant confirming that he is. The space of the house effectively silences them both. The unnamed boy, displaced from his rural origins, and Ramchand, a lifelong city dweller (barring one summer spent with his grandmother and occasional childhood journeys to his familial village), are equally troubled, suggesting that the transition from the rural to the urban is not the only source of communicative difficulty. Rather, I wish to suggest that both Ramchand and his fellow servant become tongue-tied by the movement into the bourgeois private sphere.

On one level, Ramchand comes to the Kapoor home to do what is most familiar to him: show and sell saris. But the change in venue renders this erstwhile routine activity radically unfamiliar. Ramchand is not prepared for the contempt expressed by Tina, sister of the bride-to-be, for the stock he

has brought to the Kapoor household. Rina, the bride-to-be, defends her choice to add Ramchand's saris to her existing stock as an attempt to achieve an innovative mixture of "traditional and contemporary styles." The many styles, fabrics, colors, and patterns offered by Sevak Sari House, Ramchand's employer, are homogenized under the exoticizing "ethnic" label; after all the saris, we are told, come "from around the country," a prime example being "an Orissa silk with real Palghat folk embroidery" (SS 67). These are contrasted with the high-fashion saris the Kapoor sisters have already purchased from an elite designer in Bombay. At this stage, Ramchand has no idea what the sisters are talking about, but he will learn later that he too is viewed by Rina as yet another ethnic object that can be collected, shaped, and used.

This brief conversation between Rina and Tina, in which Ramchand does not participate, anticipates the failure of the contemporary, elitist vision of the nation, a phenomenon that Ramchand will only realize himself later in the novel. While Rina's desire to mix the contemporary and traditional positions her as the epitome of what Khilnani understands in *The Idea of India* as Nehruvian modernization-without-westernization, it also reveals the limits of that ideology. Indeed, Rina's attention to the handcrafted, local origins of the sari she has chosen is not unlike that offered by Spivak in the closing chapter of her *Critique of Postcolonial Reason,* in which the author offers her own dress as an exemplary study in transnationality:

> I was wearing a jacket over a sari, and, to layer myself into warmth I was wearing, under the jacket, a full-sleeved cotton top, rather an unattractive dun-colored cheap thing, "made in Bangladesh" for the French Connection. By contrast, the sari I was wearing, also made in Bangladesh, was an exquisite woven cloth produced by the Prabartana Weavers' collective under the coordination of Farida Akhter and Farhad Mazhar. Until I saw these weavers at work, I had no idea how the *jāmdānis* that I had so admired in my childhood and youth were fabricated. It is complicated teamweaving and simultaneous embroidery at speed, hard to believe if you haven't actually seen it, certainly as delicate as lacemaking. As a result of the foreign direct investment to the international garment industry, the long tradition of Bangladeshi handlooming is dying. Prabartana not only subsidizes and "develops" the weavers' collective, but it also attempts to undo the epistemic violence suffered by the weavers by recognizing them as artists . . . Thus I was standing in the museum wearing the contradictions of transnationalization upon my body, an exhibit, though no one knew it.[25]

In this discussion of her own dress, Spivak highlights the inescapability of our suspension between local and transnational, and the inability of any

level of theoretical awareness to extricate us from the economic. In highlighting the difference between the two usages of the phrase "made in Bangladesh," Spivak emphasizes her understanding of the complexity of origins and destination, old and new. Rina's error is not that she, like Spivak, performs, through her attire, the simultaneous attraction and impossibility of authenticity nor that she occupies a contradictory and elitist position. The problem is that she fails to understand that she is perpetuating the very structures she continuously claims to be rebelling against.

Rina sees her saris as objects, without seeing the labor that their production entailed. Indeed, at this stage, she does not even seem conscious of Ramchand, despite the fact that his labor—selling saris—is being performed before her very eyes. Her manner of speech clearly betrays that she either thinks him incapable of understanding her (an assessment that would be partially correct) or is unaware of his presence altogether. Indeed, Rina does not comprehend Ramchand as a subject until he arrives at the Kapoor home on her wedding day, having taken to heart her hollow invitation to join the festivities. Theirs is more than a misunderstanding between two individuals. At the moment that Ramchand presents his wares, the Kapoor living room houses two mutually exclusive and incompatible versions of India.

Reading the Nation

Though he is not yet able to connect Rina's seemingly incongruous sense of style to larger political concerns, Ramchand finds his first entry into the Kapoor household to be a profoundly challenging, and eye-opening, experience. He concludes that "[t]he world is big, after all" (SS 70). He had already purchased new clothes and toiletries in anticipation of his sales debut on this prestigious stage; now Ramchand proceeds directly to a book and stationery shop, determined to better himself intellectually as well as materially. He budgets one hundred rupees for books, which, we are informed, is a "princely sum." The book he most wants immediately indicates the national scope of his ambitions—Ramchand asks the bookseller for a copy of Gandhi's autobiography. While Gandhi's role with respect to a truly popular nationalism may be hotly debated among contemporary proponents of subaltern studies, his canonical status within nationalist discourse is clear. Gandhi's advocacy of Hindu-Muslim unity as a moral imperative certainly echoes in Nehru's work, even if *The Discovery of India* posits it in terms that are far more secular. Gandhi himself is offered as a symbol, a true representative of India, in which capacity he is implicitly contrasted with Nehru's more problematic representational function. Gandhi

is "a man of the people" and, tellingly, "almost the embodiment of the Indian peasant" (DI 341). The qualification "almost" is necessary since, as a solicitor who had trained in England, Gandhi was certainly not a peasant in any straightforward sense. Nevertheless, to Nehru, Gandhi "seemed to emerge from the millions of India."[26] Though Gandhi's status has since been challenged by the subaltern historians, Nehru might be said to both anticipate and refute their arguments by recognizing that Gandhi's relationship to India's subalterns exceeds his own comprehension.[27] Though his style was different, Gandhi's choice of clothing was, like Nehru's (discussed in chapter 2), symbolic; while Nehru's garb performed his hybrid Hindu-Muslim heritage, Gandhi's dhoti inscribed the village in the space of the city.[28]

In the absence of the Mahatma's life story, Ramchand selects two books, both in English—*The Complete Letter Writer* and *Radiant Essays for School Children of All Ages.* English, after all, is "*the* language of national integration and bourgeois civility," and so the decision to read English-language books speaks to Ramchand's aspiration to national citizenship.[29] The former book, Ramchand believes, "would give him practice in reading, writing and communication" (SS 71). Both choices convey an acceptance of a teleological narrative of education and self-improvement, which is central to the model of citizenship offered by the liberal, secular state.

Such a model makes a number of assumptions that are central to understanding how subjects such as Ramchand and Kamla (who is the focus of the next section of this chapter) can be of the nation without being full citizens of the nation-state. Liberal individualism envisages both the rights and responsibilities of citizenship residing at the level of the individual who enters into the bourgeois public sphere as an undifferentiated citizen, while those differences that may set him or her apart from the normatively male, white, heterosexual, upper-class subject are effectively privatized. Such severing always, at best, remains incomplete—meaning that the public sphere is never the level playing field that its proponents, such as Jürgen Habermas, would like it to be—and, at worst, tacitly cooperates in the process of marginalization experienced by such nonnormative subjects, by self-consciously failing to address social conditions. Indeed, even Habermas, well known for his defence of liberal individualism in the face of challenges from alternatives such as Charles Taylor's politics of recognition, has more recently acknowledged liberalism's shortcomings in the sphere of minority rights. In particular, he admits that there is "a double coding of citizenship, with the result that the legal status defined in terms of civil rights also implies membership in a culturally defined community" and that, as a consequence, the actual implementation of legal rights for those who are not members of the

community associated with the nation may be difficult or impossible in some circumstances, particularly in newer nation-states.[30]

In many ways, Ramchand would seem to offer an ideal subaltern candidate to make the teleological journey into the space of the nation. His childhood spent among a normative family, successful, if small-scale, shopkeepers who hoped to give their son an English education, suggests that his sudden yearning for upper-middle-class life may simply be the reawakening of a dream delayed. As an individual apparently unencumbered by caste, religion, family, or any so-called traditional structures, there is nothing to stop him claiming a liberal individual model of citizenship. He even accepts the philosophical and visual construction of home that is offered to him via a Western print left on the wall depicting a thatched cottage, a rose garden, and the inscription, "Home is where the heart is," suggesting that he is able and willing to insert himself into Benedict Anderson's imagined community and its distinctively modern, Western mode of belonging. He accepts and memorizes the poster, one of the few items he inherits with his meager room, in every detail, rather than replacing it with something more to his own taste.

That he sees books as the most obvious point of access to the bourgeois nation also indicates his affiliation with a model of imagined community that is preexisting and predominantly liberal individualist. Anderson, of course, locates the emergence of the imagined community with the spread of print capitalism; reading and belonging to the nation thus go hand in hand.[31] Though Nehru does not imagine the nation in terms of print capitalism, he nevertheless understands it as a literary community, albeit one in which oral transmission plays an important role. He draws primary evidence for the existence of India as both a discrete and totalizing cultural entity from literature. The ancient epics, he asserts, "represent the typical Indian method of catering all together for various degrees of cultural development, from the highest intellectual to the simple unread and untaught villager" (DI 100). The Mahabharata, according to Nehru, shows the process whereby an "all-inclusive" civilization in which "different and even contradictory beliefs were tolerated" was brought into being (DI 107). The twentieth-century inheritor of this inclusiveness is "modern Hinduism," whose eclecticism is at odds with the entire notion of Hindu fundamentalism.[32] Furthermore, despite the heterogeneity of the Mahabharata, he claims that in the epic "a very definite attempt has been made to emphasize the fundamental unity of India." The assertion of intentionality is noteworthy; given the absence of a single known author for the text, this is a particularly gross example of the intentional fallacy. Sanskrit drama is also portrayed as an "all-India" phenomenon that bridges the cultural gap between castes and classes (DI 161–162).

Bigotry, for Nehru, is synonymous with the failure to appreciate the creative arts (DI 271). Nehru therefore positions his own literary agenda as a recapitulation of what he believes to be the subcontinent's quintessential artistic project, the Mahabharata. Indeed, it has been argued that Nehru's entire conception of unity in diversity was grounded in his reading of the Upanishads.[33] Certainly, his claim that synthesis and cultural unity are integral to Hinduism (which he sees embodied in the life of Shankara) suggests a significant overlap between the space of the nation and the space of a specifically Hindu culture (DI 190–191). The appearance in *The Discovery of India* of phrases such as "national karma" further reinforces this view (DI 524).

This overlaying of Hinduism and nationalism is inevitably at odds with the multicultural ideal. Nehru's reading subsumes the violence implicit in the Aryan subjugation of the Dravidians that, some scholars argue, the Mahabharata depicts.[34] Though Nehru acknowledges the facticity of invasion and war, he sees the conflict in question as responsible for the initial emergence of a distinctive subcontinental perspective. This transformation prefigures India's emergence as a modern nation under the yoke of the British. In *The Discovery of India* it seems that history, really, is destined to repeat itself.

Though Nehru has rightly been praised for bringing the high Sanskritic tradition to the attention of a generation that had nearly forgotten it, his decision to position the Mahabharata and the Bhagavad Gita as the nation's foundational texts is highly problematic. As Aijaz Ahmad points out, this privileging of the high Sanskritic tradition originates with the Orientalists, who ignored more democratic and syncretic aspects of India's literary history, particularly the bhakti tradition. In the process, they created a canon of South Asian literature that reflected European preconceptions of the Orient but not the range of literary production and experience, obscuring particularly secular and multilingual practices of literary production and circulation.[35] Also, he does not include Muslim or non-Sanskritic texts in the national canon. In contrast, Gandhi describes all scriptures as divinely inspired.[36] The concept of "creative energy," which Nehru employs throughout *The Discovery of India* as a marker of cultural value and associates with these high Sanskritic texts, is thus fraught with ambiguity. Losses of culture and of freedom go hand in hand for Nehru (DI 224) and, as such, nationalism "heightens cultural creativity."[37] The author points to the cultural decay of the masses as both cause, and effect, of India's subjugation (DI 58).

Ramchand's program of self-improvement would seem to answer Nehru's challenge to reverse India's cultural decline and thus to solidify its status as a viable, tolerant nation. Indeed, contemporary postcolonial theory also

tends to "invoke the traditional romantic trope of the 'self-made individual' who invents himself in the marginality of the American frontier."[38] Ramchand's educational program, if successful, would also, from a Nehruvian point of view, make him eligible to both belong to, and be seen as contributing to, a larger society.[39] But for Ramchand, the nation holds out a promise of teleological self-improvement and agency that is cruelly denied. As a child, he had been denied the promised English language education by the tyrannies of family and economics. As an adult, he must learn the hard way that, at least in philosophical terms, the loss is more imagined than real. After months of grueling study, which includes an attempt to read in its totality the Oxford English Dictionary, the letters in Ramchand's first text *The Complete Letter Writer* turn out to have no wisdom to offer, confining themselves to distant topics such as motor tours, tennis, and Welsh geography. Ramchand finally concludes that "most of the letters seemed to be written to and by frivolous and idle people" (SS 116). He further resolves that "[i]t wouldn't do to be impressed by things just because they were in English."

Radiant Essays, in contrast, is written by an Indian, and Ramchand initially finds it more appealing and more relevant to his own experience. Furthermore, it promises the national enlightenment he had originally sought in the form of Gandhi's autobiography, albeit under the guise of an essay entitled "Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru (Our Favourite Leader)." It is this very essay, however, that leads Ramchand to conclude that his studies are "stale and boring" (SS 174). If this description of the man himself fails to move Ramchand, he is certainly motivated by a distinctly Nehruvian spirit, for his next move is to begin educating himself in science—an endeavor he embraces so enthusiastically that he even gives up masturbating—and begins to dream of studying history as well.

The study of science, which, as I discussed in the last chapter, was heavily advocated by Nehru as well as other nationalists, suggests that this phase of Ramchand's self-education represents another, alternative attempt to incorporate the self into the nation. Having failed to find inspiration in the tales of nationalists leaders, British upper-class culture, or the institutions of the state (*Radiant Essays* also contains an important essay on the police, which I will discuss further in the next section), Ramchand turns to a discourse and mode of knowledge with strong links to the formation and control of the state in both colonial and postcolonial contexts. Historical study, which he never finally undertakes, similarly provides a framework for constructing, and inserting, the self into the nation. As we have seen, it was of singular importance to both Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose, who could only conceive of an independent India through the lens of a particular construction

of the South Asian past. At the same time, as the members of the subaltern studies group have all emphasized (albeit in different ways), even reflexive, theoretically aware historiography is inevitably elitist.[40] As such, for Ramchand, the study of history promises the loss of his positioned, subaltern self, every bit as much as the adoption of a new language.

Ramchand's loss of interest in sexual fantasy during his period of scientific study, in addition to providing a moment of humor in what is sometimes a tragic narrative, also underlines an important facet of his understanding of citizenship. To be a citizen, for Ramchand, is not to be a gendered or sexually desiring subject. It is for this very reason that the dynamics of gender and sexual desire ultimately serve to illustrate, even more than class and language, the exclusive nature of the Indian nation-state. Ramchand's lack of familial and social connections, together with his limited earning power, means that marriage is not a straightforward or likely prospect, and thus he cannot access the most socially conventional route toward sexual activity and fulfillment. This removal from the circuit of heteronormative sexual and social reproduction leaves him free to pursue a liberal individualist model of citizenship, at least temporarily. Such citizenship is heteronormative, of course, though it is posited on the erasure of gender and sexual difference, and is often argued to be inappropriate to India given the centrality of family and community. Perhaps it should be no surprise, then, that Ramchand's pursuit of liberal individualism also leaves him dangerously isolated and threatens him with self-erasure.

Gendering the Nation

Ramchand's journey into the space of the nation-state is finally and decisively disrupted by his encounter with a character named Kamla, who is the very figure of the subaltern woman within *The Sari Shop*. Ramchand ultimately understands that "nation-building narratives are woven through patriarchal forms of desire that circulate around female sexuality . . . even as women's political agency as historical subjects is regulated through specific, limited notions of citizenship."[41] Written in free indirect discourse, the narration allows the reader access only to Ramchand and Kamla. Like Ramchand, Kamla has tried to tread the path of a normative lower-class Indian—she has been hard working, respectful of family, and deferential to those more powerful than herself (which for Kamla is nearly everyone). Like Ramchand, she is denied entry into the space of the nation, but, for her, no narrative of self-improvement and incorporation is available even in the abstract.

The irony of the marginalization of women with respect to the space of the nation is highlighted by the contradictory treatment of gender within nationalist discourse. In *The Discovery of India,* the nation is repeatedly figured as female, both literally and figuratively. Bharat Mata, or Mother India, is explicitly constructed as a national symbol. Indeed, Mother India has taken many forms in colonial, nationalist, and postcolonial discourse.[42] Kamala, Nehru's wife, is also read as nationally representative. Both Kamala and India are, simultaneously, objects of Nehru's love that, as subjects, evade the knowing gaze of the author. Kamala

> became a symbol of Indian women, or of woman herself. Sometimes she grew curiously mixed up with my ideas of India, that land of ours so dear to us, with all her faults and weaknesses, so elusive and so full of mystery.
>
> (DI 43)

The subject of the final clause of this passage is deliberately obscured so that the elusive one could be either Kamala or India—grammatically, the two have been joined into one. The author's uncertainty as to whether he "really knew" Kamala (DI 40) at the beginning of the volume is echoed in his uncertainty about his relationship to the subcontinent, which still plagues him more than five hundred pages later.

In *The Nation and its Fragments,* Partha Chatterjee outlines the problem presented to the emerging nation by gender difference and the attempt of nationalist discourse to simultaneously incorporate and contain changing gender roles. The problem is resolved, for Chatterjee, via the creation of a "'new' woman" who "was quite the reverse of the 'common' woman." It is the latter construct that particularly concerns me here. The common woman "was coarse, vulgar, loud, quarrelsome, devoid of superior moral sense, sexually promiscuous, subjected to brutal physical oppression by males." This undesirable figure is usually illustrated via "a host of lower-class female characters who make their appearance in the social milieu of the new middle class—maidservants, washer women, barbers, peddlers, procuresses, prostitutes. It was precisely this degenerate condition of women that nationalism claimed it would reform."[43] This involved valorizing the "new woman," who was unmistakably situated as middle class with respect to education, attire, housekeeping, and reproductive practices, while at the same time essentializing the nation's women as uncontaminated repositories of a domesticated, uncolonized national culture.[44]

Conversely, the popular "enters hegemonic national discourse as a gendered category," with the class-based threat posed by the subaltern almost invariably gendered as female.[45] If questions related to gender were almost

entirely banished from middle- and upper-class consciousness in the days following independence—enabling such equalizing measures as the reform of laws pertaining to inheritance and divorce and the introduction of a common civil code to be delayed for years or abandoned altogether[46]—questions of class and caste became tied almost inexorably to images of the feminine. Even Mahasweta Devi, considered by Spivak as an exemplary commentator on the postcolonial nation and the place of the subaltern within it, stages the confrontation between an elitist version of the nation (which employs the rhetoric of Mother India) and a popular one, embodied in a washerwoman who is a tribal and bonded laborer.[47] The woman's status as doubly colonized made her the perfect emblem of subaltern victimization (rendering the imagining of the subaltern nonthreatening to the elite) while inscribing a patriarchal relationship between the classes.

This image of the subaltern woman, and the consequent strained relationship between popular awareness of class and of gender, has remained largely unchallenged in the postcolonial period. Usha Zacharias observes that while the televising of the Ramayana during the 1980s provoked an outcry from middle-class women who were less than enthusiastic about the model of citizenship Sita's self-sacrifice offered to the contemporary elite woman, "there was little popular discomfort with the obvious roles performed by the poor or lower-caste domestic."[48] Rajeswari Sunder Rajan also notes that attention to individual cases of the exploitation of women and girls, such as the widely publicized stories of Ameena, Kaneez, and Shahbano, often serves to obscure, rather than highlight, the larger social conditions that produce these sensational "cases," such as the lack of educational opportunities for poor women, inadequate resources for child protection at the state level, and a judicial reliance on social and religious custom that sometimes borders on technical illegality.[49]

If "it is the Indian *woman,* perennially and transcendentally wife, mother and homemaker, who saves the project of modernization-without-westernization," then the woman who fails to accede to these categories—like the fictional Kamla in *The Sari Shop,* who is childless and an alcoholic—decisively demonstrates its failings.[50] Despite her tragic history, it is in the unreformed (to paraphrase Chatterjee) and thus threatening mode that Kamla is perceived by Mrs Gupta and her daughter-in-law Shilpa, members of an upper-class business family and acquaintances of the Kapoors. Shilpa and her mother-in-law are celebrating the news that she is now pregnant, just five months after marrying Mrs. Gupta's son. Ensconced together in their luxurious home, both are relieved that Shilpa's accession to normative, upper-class femininity is complete. At this moment of contentedness, a tattered Kamla appears and begins to hurl abuse from beyond the compound

gate (SS 167). The Guptas react with fear and confusion. It is only much later that we learn that Kamla's appearance on their doorstep is not a random act of drunkenness. The Gupta family had, in times past, neglected to pay Kamla's husband's wages, an offence that is arguably at the root of her present misfortunes. They deliver her into the hands of the police, the disciplinary branch of the nation-state, in whose custody Kamla is repeatedly raped and beaten, and then slandered to her husband Chander, who believes the policemen who inform him that she has been wandering the street, when in fact they had been holding her and subjecting her to a brutal assault. Rape, according to Sunder Rajan, is "the index of social lawlessness"; for the police to engage in such assaults both confirms the total failure of the state they represent and illustrates the degree to which the viability of law and its accompanying forms of social organization is not posited on the experiences of marginalized subjects such as Kamla.[51]

When Ramchand learns of this story, he is severely traumatized and permanently ends his reading. The piece on the policeman in *Radiant Essays,* which celebrates him as a public servant in the name of the nation-state, cannot drive away his vision of Kamla clothed in a sari stained with blood from the waist down. Despite what has happened to her, Kamla returns once more to the Gupta household, to renew her accusations. When Kamla pays the ultimate price for her attempt to find justice and is killed, she leaves behind only seemingly unreadable traces of her earlier life—children's clothes and plastic beads, whose function Chander is totally unable to fathom. The subaltern in *The Sari Shop* cannot, finally, speak, but only because the state apparatus is so thorough in obliterating all but the most fragmentary evidence of her existence. Nor does it seem that her story can be spoken even by others. When Ramchand attempts to narrate Kamla's assault to Mrs. Sachdeva, a friend of the Guptas, she accuses him of polluting her respectable world (SS 214). Ramchand can enter her world only as a servant or as a romanticized vision of himself, shaped for Western consumption, via Rina Kapoor's new novel. Even Hari, his lower-class colleague, laughs at Kamla's appalling fate, sending Ramchand into a daze.

Kamla's story is repugnant even to those supposedly open-minded, philanthropic members of the middle and upper classes because

> woman cannot expect to be a citizen on her own account but only for something larger than herself, her citizenship is a moving away from the claims that constitute normal (that is normatively male) citizenship.[52]

For this reason, even Shilpa, whose socioeconomic position appears fairly secure, feels compelled to produce a male child. Rina proves her national worth by publishing a novel. For Kamla—illiterate and infertile—there is nothing that can make her of value to the nation and thus eligible for citizenship. Her willing descent into alcoholism and abandonment of domestic duties represents the only form of agency open to Kamla—the wholehearted embrace of an utterly marginalized, even demonized, social position.

Sunder Rajan notes that women are often trapped between their status as individual citizens (enshrined in law if not always acknowledged in practice) and their identification with a particular group or community, whose norms may overwrite their individual rights as gendered subjects.[53] Kamla, who lacks community, is, however, equally, if not more, at risk. Since she is not a member of the community, her welfare is of interest to no one; the abstract benevolence of the liberal state that ought to at least guarantee her rights is neither able nor willing to protect what she represents, nor to oppose the communities on whose existence the nation-state is premised. Ramchand's intuitive understanding of this fact not only sours his imaginative relationship with the nation-state but alarms him profoundly; after all, in her lack of family ties and her exclusion from the possibility of reproduction, Kamla is very much like him.

Recognizing Difference in the Nation

From his breakdown, Ramchand begins to forge a new vision of the nation, one distinct from, and apart from, the nation-state. This is particularly in evidence when he bursts into the private quarters of the Lakhan Singh family who have lost both their sons in the military assault on the Golden Temple. Though he regularly frequented their dhobi and knew of the family's loss, Ramchand had always been loathe to acknowledge their grief or provoke any expression of sorrow. At this moment, however, when standing in their living room, he finally expresses his sympathy and condolences. While he had previously feared hearing the details of the young boys' deaths, Ramchand now finds the story strangely cathartic. The dissolution of the boundary between public and private and the emergence of the voices that the nation-state had silenced point the way to a new national space, one that nevertheless partakes in Nehruvian secularism but is sheltered from the gaze of the state. Vision, as imagined by the availability of electrical and candlelight, becomes the exclusive prerogative of those "in their comfortable homes, surrounded by their families, rooted in tradition," but is a condition to be feared, not envied (SS 225).

Ramchand's next act—secreting himself in his room for nearly two weeks, staying away from both his workplace and the public arenas (marketplace, cinema) that had previously been his primary haunts—provides further indication of his desire to withdraw from the nation-state, whose regulations dominate, without distinction, the realms of both culture and commerce. In both fiction and theory, coming to terms with diversity within the nation is inexorably linked to the negotiation of public and private spaces. Bhikhu Parekh, for instance, though he critiques the division between the public and the private as untenable, acknowledges the need for shared public institutions, relevant to all citizens, regardless of race, religion, or ethnicity.[54] Though, for him, the public and the private spheres are not those of the Victorians or Indian nationalists, since he regards the school as an institution that straddles both spheres, Parekh nevertheless suggests the need to regulate public expressions of difference in keeping with national collective values. This is not to say that any understanding of cultural diversity necessitates a simplified division between the public and private spheres; on the contrary, this split is continuously frustrated by the notion of recognition, and is particularly fallacious in non-Western (i.e., nonindividualist) contexts.

In "The Politics of Recognition," Charles Taylor starts from the premise, previously developed by postcolonial theorists such as Franz Fanon, that negative representations of individuals based on any arbitrary marker—race, ethnicity, gender, and so forth—not only lead to an undesirable perpetuation of prejudice in the community at large, but damage the self-image of those individuals in the community who share these features.[55] As such, where negative representations reign unchallenged, individuals who are members of the maligned group face a double disadvantage: they suffer discrimination in their daily lives at the hands of other, biased individuals, and experience poor self-esteem, having internalized the dominant belief in their own inferiority. On this basis, Taylor argues that it is the duty of an ethical society not merely to refrain from casting aspersions on any portion of its members but, indeed, to actively represent all groups within society positively, so as to both achieve equality as a lived principle, and enable repressed groups to decolonize their minds. According to Taylor's critics, however, since the politics of recognition is primarily interested in difference rather than similarity, it risks participating in the exoticization and commodification of individual and collective experiences and histories.[56]

In *The Sari Shop,* recognition functions both positively and negatively. For the Kapoors, it involves the objectification and exoticization of the nation's erstwhile fellow citizens, as is evident from the stereotyping of the sari shop salesman, along with other Orientalized leitmotifs such as the guru

and the monkey in Rina's novel. For Ramchand, however, recognizing the difference of others both enhances his self-understanding and leads him away from a naïve nationalism, enhancing his personal connections with (some) others along the way. Just as the phrase "made in Bangladesh" can signify vastly different, even opposing, relationships to origins and authenticity, so too can the act of recognition. Ultimately, Ramchand realizes what Spivak can and Rina cannot—his enslavement to the realm of the economic. The possibility of constructing a viable national community in this context remains unresolved.

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Conclusion

Though diversity, in and of itself, has not been subject to the same scrutiny and debate as the concept of nation, since it has been used primarily as a descriptive term, discussions about nonhomogeneity almost inevitably extend beyond the merely observational into the discourses of ethics and politics. In this conclusion, I have chosen to briefly discuss diversity, rather than any of its attendant, more ideologically loaded, terms—such as multiculturalism, hybridity, and marginality, for instance—in order to signal my desire to distance myself from the established schools of thought on the value of, and the required response to, diversity, all of which point to specifically Western social problems. Furthermore, as the range of potential sources of exclusion from the nation covered in this book indicates, I do not wish to privilege any one source of difference. Also, while focusing on the specificities of the Indian situation, I contend that conclusions drawn from the Indian experience may have bearing elsewhere and necessarily constitute a significant contribution to the global discussion on diversity.

In considering India's diversity, it is important to recall that the term "multicultural" began its life as a descriptive term and, since its inception, has been associated with antiracist activity. I use the term multiculturalism not in order to refer to any one theorization of cultural diversity, but to stress the need to positively value and respond to diversity, rather than to merely acknowledge its facticity. Though the term multicultural has been applied repeatedly to India, and the catchphrase "unity in diversity" made familiar to every Indian child (often via Nehru's writings), Indian cultural diversity has not been extensively theorized. What theorization of India's diversity does exist offers tantalizing possibilities for reexamining the multiculturalism debate as a whole. Atul Kohli, for instance, characterizes India as multicultural in his discussion of ethnic nationalisms, but does not posit multiculturalism as offering a singular response to such conflict.[1] Vinit Haksar makes an analogous argument.[2]

Similarly, Rustom Bharucha notes that, despite the absence of any official policy of multiculturalism in India, "multiculturality" is "an indispensable component in the rethinking of [Indian] secularism."[3] That "multiculturality" is left pointedly undefined.

When speaking of India's diversity in a global, comparative context, it is essential to realize that recognition of multiple identifications is intrinsic to the Indian political system. Furthermore, numerous other pan-regional identities are enshrined in Indian law, which grants overt recognition both to religion and to groups with such designations as "backwards castes" and "tribals," and to a degree not replicated elsewhere.[4] Indeed, the provincial map of India is continuously being redrawn in response to various internal pressures.[5] As such, Kohli, Haksar, and Bharucha, in invoking multiculturalism to conceptualize India's diversity, both acknowledge India's own unique political and cultural configuration and invoke the so-called culture wars of the North Atlantic.

Multiculturalism has come to be associated with the politics of recognition, though Charles Taylor's contentious essay, "The Politics of Recognition," does not use the term. Indeed, multiculturalism is regularly employed in official, governmental discourse to designate the recognition of minorities by the state and its institutions.[6] In order to achieve these goals, Taylor argues that the community at large, at the level of the nation-state, must not only afford scope for the positive representation of difference but actively recognize and promote it. To this end, Taylor considers the case of French Canadian cultural distinctiveness and argues in favor of constitutional reforms that would see that difference and its preservation enshrined in the Canadian Constitution. Though, in theory, any such measure threatens to undermine the constitution's liberal humanist basis by subordinating individual rights to that of an imperfectly defined group, Taylor contends that, for the reasons outlined above, our cultural values—which include liberal humanism and its antecedent individualism, but which also encompass an understanding of the universal desire for cultural survival—can be best realized by partially abrogating individualism in this instance. Furthermore, he argues that, since diversity is an inherent feature of human society, the nation as a whole is bound to benefit from a greater understanding of that fact.

It is multiculturalism's possible affiliations with essentialism and its orientation to a centralized state that have been largely responsible for its rapid fall from grace. Nira Yuval-Davis, a British critic, has argued that multiculturalism is fundamentally racist. Smaro Kamboureli also views "official multiculturalism" in Canada as too deterministic.[7] Both point out that any privileging of collective identities leads inevitably to a degree of essentialism, which may be detrimental to individual self-realization.

K. Anthony Appiah, for instance, questions the desirability of the perpetuation of group identity, especially through the mechanics of the state.[8] Any identity imposed on an individual or community by the state apparatus risks undesirably circumscribing that person or group; in privileging one reading of a particular identity—whether racial, religious, linguistic, et cetera—others are invariably subsumed. In Britain, according to some critics, the politics of recognition has led to a worrying validation of religious fundamentalism and a concomitant acceptance of women's oppression and the repression of moderate standpoints.[9]

At the same time, Jürgen Habermas, among others, has expressed concern that recognizing minority cultural values and formations risks undermining the dominant, national (i.e., liberal) culture, whose ascendancy cannot simply be relativized away.[10] Indeed, many critics view the project of relativity, which is necessary for any radical embrace of diversity, with extreme suspicion. Habermas's argument implicitly relies on what has become known as an additive model of cultural diversity, which imagines the existence, at some point in the past, of a relatively homogeneous and unproblematic national community, whose status has recently been complicated by the arrival of individuals and groups who challenge the earlier consensus. Additive models therefore invoke the notion of historical precedence, often to subsume minority claims. Both critics and supporters of the principle of recognizing minorities agree that accepting this process involves "forsaking modernism" and the humanist ideals it implies.[11] Insofar as modernism entails an acceptance of teleological historiography, which points inevitably toward unity and totality, rather than multiplicity and difference, it is clearly at odds with a nonimperial valorization of cultural difference.[12]

Indeed, the additive model may be particularly unhelpful for conceptualizing the diversity of a postcolonial nation such as India, where a strong sense of unity in diversity arguably preceded any manifestation of nationalism in the modern sense, and where even sources of religious and cultural difference (which the additive model seems most equipped to tackle—it largely ignores gender and class, though, as we have seen, these can be equally insurmountable barriers to full citizenship) have a very long history, rendering ridiculous any attempt to assert historical primacy. As I noted in the last chapter, even Habermas himself has more recently acknowledged the inevitability of the limitation of the rights of nonnormative citizens within the liberal state, particularly in circumstances where the state itself is weak, a situation that has repeatedly arisen in the postcolonial world.

In light of both the particular inappropriateness of liberal individualism to India—given the many sources of both difference and inequity with the

nation-state—and the fraught nature of the politics of recognition, can there be a model of diversity that both responds to India's indigenous multiplicity while addressing its particular history of inequality and uneven development? Recent historiography has vacillated between unbridled praise of the utopic cultural harmony of India before the Raj and an overt essentializing of cultural and religious differences on the subcontinent.[13] The fact is that a Muslim minority did manage to rule over the Hindu majority for generations without continuously resorting to genocide, and there is nothing unusual about this in the context of global, preindustrial history.[14] Similarly, many Hindus today feel a strong affective bond with their Muslim countrymen, as is evident from the number of prominent citizens who spoke out in defense of Islam and in favor of banning Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses,* and in condemnation of the destruction of the Babri Masjid by Hindu fundamentalists.[15]

Indeed, it may not be necessary to particularize India as a developing country in considering its cultural diversity. A curious sort of convergence is visible between descriptions of premodern and postmodern multiculturality. According to Albert Melucci, for example, in "information societies [. . .] [i]ndividuals find themselves enmeshed in multiple bonds of belonging created by the proliferation of social positions, associative networks and reference groups." Each of the spheres in which the individual participates has its own language.[16] This is equally true, however, of many premodern societies.[17] Certainly, the multiple identifications of caste, region, and gender, for instance, are forms of identification indigenous to premodern India. By this logic, modernity functions to introduce an essentializing model of identity, via colonization, only to eventually subvert itself.

As a product of modernity, the nation might seem to fit neatly into the essentializing phase, but such a simplistic schema belies the central role that states can play in ensuring both individual and group rights and in mediating between competing essentialisms, thereby facilitating the fluid, heterogeneous identities that Melucci identifies with postmodernism. While some critics have heralded the demise of the nation as a unit of identification, the nation remains deeply important for all the writers covered in this book, even (indeed especially) those that hold it up to scrutiny. The war on terror has engendered a resurgence in nationalist positions that urgently necessitates a reexamination (and not a dismissal) of the role of the nation and its others—both within and outside its borders. This is a time of both increased scrutiny of South Asia by the West, and of heightened self-examination on the subcontinent itself, as India and Pakistan in particular struggle to confront their histories of

underdevelopment and regional conflict. It has thus never been more crucial to understand the origins and nature of India's political and cultural arrangements in a global context. As a key player in the partition of colonial India, Nehru was one of the primary architects of modern South Asian politics whose legacy offers both inspiration and a cautionary tale. This dual legacy is something with which all contemporary imaginings of the Indian nation struggle.

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Notes

Introduction

1. Ramanujan, *Collected Essays,* 7.
2. P. Chatterjee, *Nation and Its Fragments,* 11.
3. Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 7.
4. R. Kumar, *Essays in the Social History of Modern India,* 14.
5. Sethi, *Myths of the Nation,* 5.
6. Jaidev, "Na Anne Wala Post-Colonialism?" 182.
7. Aijaz Ahmad, *Lineages of the Present,* 145.
8. Pappu, "Determining Nations," 95.
9. Spivak, *Critique of Postcolonial Reason,* 188.
10. O'Connor, "When is a Nation?"
11. The voter turnout in the 1999 elections, for instance, was 60 percent, a rate comparable with those found in other democratic countries such as the United States and Britain.
12. Radhakrishnan, "Nationalism, Gender, and the Narrative of Identity," 88.
13. Trivedi, "India and Post-Colonial Discourse," 240; Spivak, "Introduction," in *Imaginary Maps,* xxvi–xxvii.
14. Khilnani, *Idea of India.*
15. P. Chatterjee, *Nation and Its Fragments,* 6.
16. Khilnani, *Idea of India,* 119.
17. P. Roy, *Indian Traffic,* 128.
18. This issue was explored by, among others, Rabindranath Tagore, in his novel of ideas, *The Home and the World.*
19. Katrak, "Indian Nationalism," 400. Joanna Liddle and Rama Joshi make a similar point.
20. Ghosh, *The Imam and the Indian,* 270.
21. As P. Chatterjee points out, even in the United States, which, at least in legal terms, is usually offered as the definitive example of a secular state, religion has a complex and, sometimes, contradictory, role in public life. India may not be perfectly secular either, but it need not necessarily aspire to be so. *A Possible India: Essays in Political Criticism.*
22. A. Chaudhuri, "Poles of Recovery."
23. P. Chatterjee, *Nation and Its Fragments,* 10.

24. Papastergiadis, "Ambivalence in Cultural Theory," 181.
25. This is evident from the Indian Constitution, which guarantees, among other things, the right to private ownership and to a fair trial.
26. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe,* 35.
27. Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory,* 248.
28. Paul Brass illustrates this succinctly in the case of the United Provinces. See *Language, Religion and Politics in North India,* 149. P. Chatterjee identifies the same phenomenon in Bengal. *Nation and Its Fragments,* 52.
29. Van Der Veer, *Religious Nationalism,* 170–171.
30. Phadnis, "Politics of Language," 18.
31. Aziz Ahmad, *Intellectual History of Islam in India,* 91.
32. Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 46, 139.
33. A. Chaudhuri, "Modernity and the Vernacular," xxii.
34. Sethi, *Myths of the Nation,* 22.
35. Robert King, *Nehru and the Language Politics of India,* 155.
36. Lelyveld, "Fate of Hindustani," 189–190.
37. Poole, *Nation and Identity,* 104.
38. Robert King, *Nehru and the Language Politics of India,* 76.
39. Nehru, *Discovery of India,* 169. All further references will be given in the body of the text as DI.
40. Robert King, *Nehru and the Language Politics of India,* 75.
41. Khilnani, *Idea of India,* 23.
42. Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 36.
43. Matthews, Shackle, and Husain, *Urdu Literature,* 13–14.
44. Katzenstein, "Preferential Policies," 138.
45. Austin, *Indian Constitution,* 277.
46. Robert King, *Nehru and the Language Politics of India,* 77–78.
47. Khilnani, *Idea of India,* 186.
48. Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion,* 98.
49. Phadnis, "Politics of Language,"18.
50. Robert King, *Nehru and the Language Politics of India,* 85, and Apte, "Multilingualism in India," 148.
51. Krishnaswamy and Burde, *Politics of Indians' English,* 11–12.
52. Certainly, some Indian literature in English self-consciously writes back to the imperial center, as described by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin in *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures.*
53. Bhatnagar, *Political Consciousness,* 8.
54. For a more complete treatment of this issue, see A. Rai, *Hindi Nationalism.*
55. Beginning in the mid-1990s a series of name-changes, initiated by the BJP and regionalist parties, occurred in India's major cities. Bombay was renamed Mumbai (after the Marathi goddess Mumbadevi), Calcutta became Kolkata (a change in spelling that does not actually impact local pronunciation), Madras became Chennai, and Cochin became Kochi, among others. These changes have been controversial, particularly in the case of Bombay/Mumbai, where the

new name arguably inscribes the preeminence of one linguistic-religious group in a heterogeneous metropolis. As Nilufer E. Bharucha points out, while renamings have occurred "in the guise of postcolonial repossession," it also "impose[s] their own brand of postcolonial hegemony and regional hegemony." See "Bombay to Mumbai: Postcolonial Repossessions and Hegemonies," 13. The Indian National Congress, which returned to power at the federal level in 2004, has deemed both versions of these names acceptable for official purposes. The original names are used throughout this book for several reasons: they are in wider general use, they are preferred by the writers discussed in this book, and they reflect the complex and conflicted history of Indian identity that is the book's subject.

56. P. Roy, *Indian Traffic,* 165.
57. Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 24.
58. P. Chatterjee, *Nation and Its Fragments,* 84–91.
59. Brennan, "National Longing for Form," 49–50.
60. Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 30.
61. I refer, of course, to Fredric Jameson's controversial essay, "World Literature in an Age of Multinational Capitalism."
62. Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory,* 43–70.
63. This has been acknowledged within the field of Indian literary criticism. See Sarma, *Nationalism in Indo-Anglian Fiction.*
64. The publication of such titles as "Magic Realism as Postcolonial Discourse" by Stephen Slemon, and *Coterminous Worlds: Magical Realism and Contemporary Post-Colonial Literature in English* by Elsa Luanti indicate the degree to which magical realism and the postcolonial have been accepted as isomorphic.
65. Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel."
66. Sanyal, *Indianness in Major Indo-English Novels,* 63–65.
67. He appears both in Tariq Rahman's *A History of Pakistani Literature in English* and in M. K. Naik's *A History of Indian Literature in English.*
68. Khilnani, *Idea of India,* 122.
69. Aijaz Ahmad, for instance, links Nehru with the "stagnation" of the post-colonial state. See *In Theory,* 41. Bhagwan D. Dua similarly sees the corruption of the Congress party as beginning with Nehru. See "Nehru's Federalism."

Chapter 1

1. Khilnani, *Idea of India,* 39.
2. Shintri, "Glimpses of Nehru, the Writer," 178.
3. Quoted in Khilnani, *Idea of India,* 22.
4. Sethi, *Myths of the Nation,* 20.
5. B. R. Nanda, *Jawaharlal Nehru,* 270.
6. This is hardly surprising given that *The Discovery of India* was not published until 1946, by which point Indian independence seemed a foregone conclusion.
7. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man," 360–367.

8. A. Chaudhuri, "Construction of the Indian Novel in English," xxiv.
9. Ibid., xxiv.
10. V. Lal, "Nehru as Writer," 21.
11. Alphonso-Karkala, "Nehru's Aesthetic Sensibilities," 193.
12. Ramanan, "Jawaharlal Nehru," 55–56.
13. Narula, "Style that Validates," 58.
14. White, *Tropics of Discourse,* 89.
15. Stilz, "Experiments in Squaring the Ellipsis," 164.
16. Benedict Anderson emphasizes that symbols such as the tomb of the Unknown Soldier, which are central to the construction of the national community, evoke emotive and, even, illogical responses. See *Imagined Communities.*
17. The problematization of historical knowledge and the concomitant valorization of individual perspectives are both characteristics of postmodern literary and historical scholarship. See Hutcheon, *Poetics of Postmodernism,* 89–94.
18. Quoted in Khilnani, *Idea of India,* 169.
19. Jawaharlal Nehru frequently cites volumes from the Everyman's Library (DI 80), Penguin (DI 302), and other long-established mainstream English-language publishers.
20. Somnath Zutshi, quoted in Sethi, *Myths of the Nation,* 12.
21. See, for example, G. W. Russell's remark on the "godlike fullness of Wisdom" in the Upanishads (DI 93).
22. Tagore, *Tagore Reader,* 182–183.
23. Gyanendra Pandey, *Construction of Communalism,* 115–116.
24. Quoted in Khilnani, *Idea of India,* 154.
25. See, for example, A. J. Greenberg, *British Image of India.*
26. Radhakrishnan, "Nationalism, Gender, and the Narrative of Identity," 88.
27. See M. K. Gandhi, *Young India,* September 25, 1924, reprinted in M. K. Gandhi, *The Essential Writings of Mahatma Gandhi,* 41.
28. See Bridget Allchin and Raymond Allchin, *Rise of Civilization in India and Pakistan.* The ethnic origins of the Indus Valley people are, however, still very much a subject of controversy.
29. I rely on T. N. Madan's distinction between secular, secularism, and secularization. Secularism entails the deliberate exclusion of the spiritual from the material world and is a decidedly modern, Western concept. The word itself does not appear in the English language until 1851. Certainly, there is no evidence to suggest that the Indus Valley civilization was secularized in this way. *Modern Myths, Locked Minds,* 5–25.
30. Following Edward Said, I use Orientalism to refer to an "ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and . . . 'the Occident'" enacted by those who made it their practice to write, teach, or research Asia in particular. *Orientalism,* 2–3. I hold with Aijaz Ahmad, however, that this is a distinctly modern phenomenon and not a discourse as such. *In Theory,* 179.
31. Madan, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds,* 180–188.
32. Quoted from *Time and Tide,* March 9, 1940, in Bolitho, *Jinnah,* 127.
33. Quoted in M. K. Gandhi, *Essential Writings of Mahatma Gandhi,* 38.

34. M. K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings,* 92.
35. P. Chatterjee, *Nation and Its Fragments,* 73.
36. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes,* 135.
37. Though he does not say so, it seems most likely that Jawaharlal Nehru is referring to the former Director General of Archeology in India, the author of *A Guide to Taxila.*
38. Madan, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds,* 110.
39. M. K. Gandhi, *Way to Communal Harmony,* 28.
40. Aziz Ahmad, *Intellectual History of Islam in India,* 24.
41. Krishnaswamy and Burde, *Politics of Indians' English,* 21.
42. Poole, *Nation and Identity,* 12.
43. Melucci, "Identity and Difference," 63.
44. Khilnani, *Idea of India,* 167.
45. Though there is some disagreement about the nature and origins of this story, it is acknowledged in such classic accounts of Indian history as Judith Brown's *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy* and Stanley Wolpert's *A New History of India,* among others.
46. That this was the established explanation for the mutiny well before the 1940s is evident from such texts as J. C. Allen's *A Narrative of Indian History for High Schools,* which was published simultaneously in Calcutta and Bombay and, according to the introduction, was addressed to an Indian audience.
47. Ahmed, *Jinnah,* 39.
48. Sayeed, *Pakistan,* 13.
49. See, for example, Ahmed, *Jinnah,* 80.
50. Sayeed, *Pakistan,* 84.
51. Paul R. Brass provides a brief list of works, covering the years 1871 to 1964, which interpreted modern South Asian history in this way. See *Language, Religion and Politics in North India,* 120–121. Also see, for example, Chandra, *Communalism in Modern India.*
52. Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics in North India,* 141, 121.
53. A. Srivastava, "*The Empire Writes Back,*" 77.
54. Sayeed, *Pakistan,* 132.
55. Schuster and Wint, *India and Democracy,* 179.
56. Sayeed, *Pakistan,* 91.
57. B. R. Nanda, *Jawaharlal Nehru,* 115.
58. Ahmed, *Jinnah,* 128.
59. Khilnani, *Idea of India,* 151. The Bharatiya Janata Party maintains that India is a Hindu country and that the onus is on non-Hindus to integrate into Hindu society without demanding any kind of special privilege or recognition. For a more complete treatment of BJP activities and policies, see Kishwar, *Religion at the Service of Nationalism and Other Essays.*
60. Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory,* 255.
61. Gyanendra Pandey, "In Defence of the Fragment," 559.
62. Khilnani, *Idea of India,* 167.
63. Werbner, "Essentialising Essentialism," 247.

Chapter 2

1. Though Salman Rushdie's attempt to reproduce English as it is commonly spoken in India does have precedents, such as G. V. Desani's *All About H. Hatterr,* he has nevertheless been lauded as the writer who "finally brought the spoken language off the streets and onto the printed page." Desai, "Indian Fiction Today," 212.
2. Sethi, *Myths of the Nation,* 46, 54.
3. Chansoria, *Nehru's Literary Writings,* 129–130.
4. See, for example, Dasenbrook, "Politics of Stylistic Experimentation," 67, and P. Lal, "Second Thoughts on English in India," 16.
5. See Deshpande, "Nation and Region," 114, and Krishnaswamy and Burde, *Politics of Indians' English,* 50, respectively.
6. Sridhar, "Pragmatic Differences."
7. Tymoczko, "Post-Colonial Writing," 20.
8. Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands,* 16.
9. I use the term "transcreation," coined by P. Lal, in order to acknowledge the dynamism and creativity involved in formulating an equivalent literary text in another language.
10. Basnett and Trivedi, "Introduction," 6.
11. See Basnett and Trivedi, "Introduction."
12. Indeed, many Marxist critics prescribed realism as the most appropriate genre for effecting such critiques. See, for example, Lukacs, *Theory of the Novel.*
13. Spivak, *Critique of Postcolonial Reason,* 72.
14. Aijaz Ahmad writes that their shared commitment to Marxism makes it all the more difficult, and all the more crucial, to oppose Fredric Jameson's view on national allegory and third-world literature: *In Theory,* 102. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak affirms the importance of Marxism to her own thought in the same volume where she demonstrates beyond doubt Marx's eurocentricity: *Critique of Postcolonial Reason,* 68.
15. P. Srivastava, "Age of Nehru," 75.
16. See, for example, Anand, *Coolie.*
17. Suleri, *Rhetoric of English India,* 11.
18. Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory,* 118.
19. Jeremy Gavron summarizes the critical response to the novel in "A Suitable Joy."
20. Trivedi, "Translation as Recovery," 31.
21. Trivedi, "Rushdie into Hindi," 35.
22. Salman Rushdie depicts the Jallianwala Bagh massacre as having been carried out by British, rather than Indian, troops, for instance.
23. Rushdie, "Introduction," x.
24. Trivedi, "Translation as Recovery," 31.
25. Paranjape, "Coping with Post-Colonialism," 42.
26. Choudhuri, "Plurality of Languages," 28.
27. Frost, "Biography."

28. See Krishnaswamy and Burde, *Politics of Indians' English.*
29. I have taken this phrase from Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, *Real and Imagined Women,* 133, but the phenomenon she describes is more fully discussed by P. Chatterjee in *The Nation and Its Fragments.*
30. Seth, *Suitable Boy,* 927, 959. All further references will be given in the body of the text as ASB.
31. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man," 360–367.
32. Choudhuri, "Plurality of Languages," 31.
33. P. Chatterjee, *Nation and Its Fragments,* 39.
34. Quoted in Lele and Singh, "Language and Literature of *Dalits* and *Sants,*" 33.
35. Trivedi, "India and Post-Colonial Discourse," 240.
36. Tirumalesh, "Translation and Multiculturalism," 17.
37. As a religious procession, the Ram Lila is an act of celebration for both performers and viewers, all of whom can thus be broadly said to be participants in the religious festival. The fact that the performance is traditionally an amateur one, with the actors gaining their roles not through audition but as a result of their position in the community, further reinforces this blurring of boundaries.
38. See Manuel, "Historical Survey," 93–113.
39. Qureshi, "Urdu Ghazal in Performance," 176.
40. Ali, trans. and introduction, *Golden Tradition,* 8.
41. Faruqi and Pritchett, "Lyric Poetry in Urdu," 96.
42. Manuel, "Historical Survey," 94.
43. Russell, trans. and ed., *Hidden in the Lute,* 75.
44. Ibid., 139.
45. Faruqi and Pritchett, "Lyric Poetry in Urdu," 101–102.
46. Qureshi, "Urdu Ghazal in Performance," 176.
47. Manuel, "Historical Survey," 93.
48. Kalidas, "Glimpses into History," 36–49.
49. Qureshi, "Urdu Ghazal in Performance," 185.
50. Chandola, *Music as Speech,* 46–47.
51. Van Der Meer, *Hindustani Music,* 3.
52. Chandola, *Music as Speech,* 46.
53. C. R. Sanakaran and B. Chaitanya Deva, quoted in Chandola, *Music as Speech,* 43.
54. Reginald Massey and Jamila Massey, *Music of India,* 38.
55. Ibid., 50.
56. Ibid., 52.
57. Manuel, "Music, the Media, and Communal Relations," 119.
58. Ali, trans. and introduction, *Golden Tradition,* 38.
59. Russell, trans. and ed., *Hidden in the Lute,* 146.
60. Ibid.
61. Ibid.
62. Kalidas, "Glimpses into History," 30.
63. Ali, trans. and introduction, *Golden Tradition,* 4.

64. Faruqi and Pritchett, "Lyric Poetry in Urdu," 99.
65. Manuel, "Historical Survey," 97.
66. Kalidas, "Glimpses into History," 48–49.
67. Van Der Meer, *Hindustani Music,* 123–126.
68. Rosenthal, *Story of Indian Music,* 77–79.
69. Farrell, *Indian Music and the West,* 71–72.
70. Manuel, "Historical Survey," 97.
71. Ibid., 101.
72. Chandra, *Communalism in Modern India,* 132.
73. Manuel, "Historical Survey," 101.
74. Post, "Professional Women in Indian Music," 106.
75. Manuel, "Historical Survey," 101.
76. This claim is incorporated in their mission statement available on their website.
77. Van Der Meer, *Hindustani Music,* 148.
78. Manuel, "Historical Survey," 106.
79. Manuel, "Popularization and Transformation," 353.
80. Historically, Bombay has been a port for Portuguese trade, a seat of government for the Raj, the heart of the Parsi community, and an important center for both Gujarati- and Marathi-speaking Indians. See Wolpert, *A New History of India,* 174, 254, 369.
81. Trivedi, "Translation as Recovery," 30.
82. Joshi, *Last Jet-Engine Laugh,* 24.
83. Van Der Meer, *Hindustani Music,* 77.
84. Joshi, *Last Jet-Engine Laugh,* 23–24.
85. Van Der Meer, *Hindustani Music,* 87.
86. Courtney, "Rag Darbari Kanada."
87. Rosenthal, *Story of Indian Music,* 12.
88. Welch, *Indian Art and Culture 1300–1900,* 344.
89. Ibid., 342.
90. Trivedi, "Translation as Recovery," 30.
91. Chandola, *Music as Speech,* 47.
92. Welch, *Indian Art and Culture 1300–1900,* 287.
93. Ibid., 344.
94. Faruqi and Pritchett, "Lyric Poetry in Urdu," 94.
95. Chandola, *Music as Speech,* 6.
96. Ibid., 72.
97. Simms, "Aspects of Cosmological Symbolism," 67.
98. Qureshi, "Urdu Ghazal in Performance," 185.

Chapter 3

1. Birch, "Postmodernist Chutneys," 1.
2. Uskalis, "Contextualizing Myth," paragraph 1.
3. Rushdie, *Midnight's Children,* 192. All further references will be given in the body of the text as MC.

4. Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things,* for instance, is called realist by Laura Moss and magical realist by Alexandra Podgorniak. See, respectively, '"The Plague of Normality'" and "Magical Realism, Indian-Style."
5. D'haen, "Magical Realism and Postmodernism," 195.
6. Slemon, "Magic Realism as Postcolonial Discourse," 421.
7. Connell, "Discarding Magic Realism," 96–98.
8. Indeed, this is one of the fundamental problems with the category magical realism, for it would be a vast oversimplification to say that all nineteenth-century realist novels eschew the marvelous in any absolute sense. Consider, for instance, the eponymous character's apparition of Rochester's voice. Bronte, *Jane Eyre,* 467.
9. See, for example, Hutcheon, *Poetics of Postmodernism.*
10. Chansoria, *Nehru's Literary Writings,* 126.
11. Devadawson, '"Shaking up a Continent,'" 117.
12. K. K. Chatterjee, "Art of Creative Self-Expression," 50.
13. Rege, "Victim into Protagonist?" 342.
14. Brennan, *Salman Rushdie and the Third World,* 85.
15. Merivale, "Saleem Fathered by Oskar," 11.
16. Stilz, "Experiments in Squaring the Ellipsis," 164.
17. Batty, "Art of Suspense," 52.
18. The nationalist art critic Ramananda, for instance, held this view. Mitter, *Art and Nationalism,* 121.
19. The ancestors of today's Sri Lankan Tamils emigrated from South India, and Tamils in Sri Lanka today maintain their distinctive language, ethnic identity, and the Hindu faith. See Jupp, *Sri Lanka.*
20. Given that many of the empires that ruled the Punjab also ruled Afghanistan, it should be no surprise that the two are similar in a number of ways.
21. For a complete account of Indo-Pakistani border disputes, see Blinkenberg, *India-Pakistan,* Vol. 1, *The Historical Part.*
22. Dhar, *Indira Gandhi.*
23. Talbot, *India and Pakistan,* 165–172.
24. Said, *Orientalism.*
25. Hawes, "Leading History by the Nose."
26. Rege, "Victim into Protagonist?" 361.
27. Musgrove, "Travel and Unsettlement," 32.
28. Ten Kortenaar, "*Midnight's Children,*" 44.
29. D. Massey, *Space, Place and Gender,* 169.
30. Bauman, "Making and Unmaking of Strangers," 54.
31. Werbner, "Essentialising Essentialism," 228.
32. Anzaldua, *Borderlands/La Frontera.*
33. R. Phillips, "Writing Travel," 84.
34. See, for example, J. Phillips, "Lagging Behind," 64.
35. D. W. Price, "Salman Rushdie's 'Use and Abuse of History'," 103.
36. Hawes, "Leading History by the Nose," 148.
37. In this I agree with Laura Moss that *The Moor's Last Sigh* parodies *Midnight's Children* in both form and content. '"Forget those damnfool realists!'"

38. Rushdie, interview with Maya Jaggi.
39. Huggan, "Postcolonial Exotic," 24.
40. The BJP, for instance, frequently invokes religious and cultural purity in its party rhetoric.
41. For Rushdie, Bombay is *the* postcolonial city because, in his view, it epitomizes a creative and harmonious diversity. See Mishra, "Postcolonial Differend," 12.
42. M. K. Gandhi, *Essential Writings,* 297.
43. J. Greenberg, '"The Base Indian'?" 95.
44. Cantor, "Tales of the Alhambra," 335.
45. Reilly, *Medieval Spains,* 122.
46. Of course, the mere existence of religious tracts insisting on the need to avoid intermarriage—and, sometimes, social interaction——with members of other faiths is perhaps the best evidence that such activities did in fact occur and might not have been rare.
47. John Clement Ball, for instance, states that moorish Spain had "Western Europe's most multiracial and religiously plural populace" and claims that al-Andalus was "heterodox" and "accommodating." "Acid in the Nation's Bloodstream" 41. This view is echoed, albeit in more tentatively, by Stephen Henighan. "Coming to Benengeli," 61.
48. Wasserstein, "Jews, Christians and Muslims," 176.
49. Reilly, *Medieval Spains,* 191.
50. Ibid., 201.
51. Weiss, "At the End of East/West," paragraph 44.
52. Ball, "Acid in the Nation's Bloodstream," 41.
53. Schultheis, "Postcolonial Lack and Aesthetic Promise," 570.
54. Dodds, *Architecture and Ideology,* 97, 99.
55. Ibid., 105–106.
56. Ibid., 109.
57. Mitter, *Indian Art,* 131–136.
58. Ibid., 147.
59. Welch, *Imperial Mughal Painting,* 47.
60. Ibid., 60.
61. Quoted in Beach, *Mughal and Rajput Painting,* 48. Akbar's sentiment was recorded by one of his chroniclers in 1582.
62. Banerji, "Orientalism of E. B. Havell," 41–56.
63. See the earlier section on Jawaharlal Nehru for a brief discussion of classicization and nationalism.
64. Guha-Thakurta, *Making of a New 'Indian' Art,* 166.
65. Coomaraswamy, *Dance of Siva,* 54.
66. Guha-Thakurta, *Making of a New 'Indian' Art,* 255.
67. For a detailed discussion of Abanindranath Tagore's style, see Mitter, *Art and Nationalism.*
68. Mishra, "Postcolonial Differend," 12.
69. Dalmia, "From Jamshetjee Jeejeebhoy," 182.

70. Mitter, *Indian Art,* 206–211.
71. Ibid., 199, 206.
72. Dom Moraes, quoted in D. W. Price, "Salman Rushdie's 'Use and Abuse of History,'" 98.
73. Guha-Thakurta, *Making of a New 'Indian' Art,* 90.
74. P. Srivastava, "Age of Nehru," 75.
75. Guha-Thakurta, *Making of a New 'Indian' Art,* 157.
76. Papastergiadis, "Tracing Hybridity in Theory," 266.
77. Nandan, "Diasporic Consciousness," 54.
78. Spivak, *Critique of Postcolonial Reason,* 334.
79. Araeen, "New Beginning," 9.
80. Baker, "You Must Remember This," 51.
81. I am thinking, of course, of Homi K. Bhabha's "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation" and Roland Barthes's *S/Z.*
82. Rushdie, *Satanic Verses.*
83. Henighan, "Coming to Benengeli," 69.
84. For a detailed discussion of gender relations in *The Tale of Genji,* see Tyler, "Marriage, Rank and Rape."
85. Ibid., paragraph 17.
86. J. Greenberg, "'The Base Indian'?" 98.
87. Eggar, "Ambivalent Geographies," 26.
88. Taylor, "Politics of Recognition," 44.
89. Rushdie, *The Moor's Last Sigh,* 281.
90. Henighan, "Coming to Benengeli," 67.

Chapter 4

1. Sahgal, *Prison and Chocolate Cake* and *From Fear Set Free.*
2. Vijayalakshmi Pandit's extensive correspondence with Jawaharlal Nehru attests to that relationship. See Jawaharlal Nehru, *Before Freedom: Nehru's Letters to his Sister.*
3. Vijayalakshmi Pandit wrote two memoirs, *So I Became a Minister* and *The Scope of Happiness,* and has been the subject of several biographies.
4. Shyamala A. Narayan, for instance, sees Sahgal's work as predominantly autobiographical. See "The Autobiographical Element in Nayantara Sahgal's Fiction."
5. Nayantara Sahgal, in an interview by Nistula Hebbar, "Fascism is on the Rise."
6. From an interview with Jasbir Jain, quoted in Mini Nanda, "Power Structure," 183.
7. Sahgal, "Illusion and Reality," 3.
8. As is evident from his support of the Hindu Code Bill in 1956. The Hindu Code Bill was just one of a series of laws passed at the national and provincial levels in independent India that dealt with explicitly religious issues. P. Chatterjee, *A Possible India,* 236–241.

9. Mohanram, "Narrating the Nation-in-Process," 157.
10. For a complete discussion of communities of affiliation—those held together by shared ideas—as an alternative to units of filiation, held together through genetic relation, see Said, *The World, The Text and The Critic.*
11. Sahgal, "Schizophrenic Imagination," 34.
12. See, for example, Gilbert and Gubar, '"Forward Into the Past'" and Iseman, "Our Fathers' Daughters."
13. See, for example, M. K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings,* 53–54.
14. Sahgal, *Rich Like Us,* 161. All further references will be given in the body of the text as RLU.
15. Indeed, Kamaraj Nadar claimed to have decided that Indira Gandhi should be made Prime Minister before Nehru had even passed away and prior to Gandhi expressing any interest in the post herself. See Masani, *Indira Gandhi,* 125.
16. Dhar, *Indira Gandhi,* 134.
17. Homi Bhabha's usage of the term derives from Freud's discussion of the uncanny (unheimlich), also characterized by doubleness. Freud, "The Uncanny."
18. Bhabha, "World and the Home," 141.
19. Desai, "Introduction," 11.
20. P. Chatterjee, *Nation and Its Fragments,* 120.
21. S. Rai, "Nayantara Sahgal's *Rich Like Us,*" 195.
22. Bachelard, *Poetics of Space,* 150–151.
23. J. M. Price, "Apotheosis of Home."
24. Edward Relph, quoted in J. M. Price, "Apotheosis of Home," 39.
25. Khilnani, *Idea of India,* 139.
26. M. K. Gandhi, *Way to Communal Harmony.*
27. Aijaz Ahmad, *Lineages of the Present,* 145.
28. Uraizee, "Decolonizing the Mind," 164.
29. Ibid., 162.
30. Hubel, "Politics of the Poor," 84.
31. Sahgal, "Myth Reincarnated," 28.
32. Zygmunt Bauman, for instance, describes the elimination of minorities as part of the process whereby society is ordered. He defends the social construction of others as other since he sees it as necessary, rejecting multiculturalism and pluralism. See "The Making and Unmaking of Strangers." Nikos Papastergiadis also notes that hybridity was a great source of tension under colonialism. "Tracing Hybridity in Theory," 265.
33. Jain, "Post-Colonial Realities," 169.
34. Uraizee, for instance, "Decolonizing the Mind," 172.
35. Kirpal, "*Rich Like Us,*" 172.
36. Quoted in Paranjape, "Crisis of Contemporary India," 294.
37. Hubel, "Politics of the Poor," 91.
38. Spivak, *Critique of Postcolonial Reason.*
39. Mann, "Elliptic Feminism," 112.

40. Indeed, this novel is not the only one where the line between the public and the private is blurred. See Scott, "Female Autonomy."
41. Sahgal, "Illusion and Reality," 10.
42. Consider, for instance, Nayantara Sahgal's use of the phrase "lesser breeds" to introduce her recent critique of the war in Iraq, "Wars and 'peace': The Road to Iraq." She also discusses "a breed of men who quite soberly assessed themselves as the rightful arbiters of affairs."
43. Spivak, *Critique of Postcolonial Reason,* 28.
44. Khilnani, *Idea of India,* 196.
45. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote extensively about his own life in *An Autobiography: With Musings on Recent Events in India* and *The Discovery of India.* Vijayalakshmi Pandit and Sahgal herself have produced two autobiographies each. In addition, Indira Gandhi, Nehru's other sister Krishna Nehru Hutheesing, and Sonia Gandhi, Indira's daughter-in-law, now leader of the Congress party have produced accounts of India's most famous family. There are also works by more distant and lesser known relatives, such as B. K. Nehru. See Indira Gandhi, *My Truth,* Hutheesing, *We Nehrus,* and Sonia Gandhi, *Freedom's Daughter, Two Alone, Two Together,* and *Rajiv.*
46. Sahgal, *Prison and Chocolate Cake,* 51.
47. Sahgal, *Lesser Breeds,* 97. All further references will be given in the body of the text as LB.
48. Mohanram, "Narrating the Nation-in-Process," 143.
49. Siraj-Blatchford, *Early Years,* 4.
50. Connolly, *Racism, Gender Identities and Young Children,* 195.
51. Sahgal, in an interview by Hebbar, "Fascism is on the Rise."
52. Nehru, *Discovery of India,* 259.
53. Melucci, "Identity and Difference."
54. Higgins and Lepps, "'Passport Please.'"
55. See Bhabha, "The World and the Home."
56. Hatcher, *Eclecticism and Modern Hindu Discourse.*
57. Ibid., 133.
58. Ibid., 4.
59. Haksar, *Rights, Communities and Disobedience,* 89.
60. Hatcher, *Eclecticism and Modern Hindu Discourse,* 90.
61. Sahgal, "Illusion and Reality."
62. See Korte, *English Travel Writing.*
63. Musgrove, "Travel and Unsettlement."
64. Spivak, *Critique of Postcolonial Reason,* 6.
65. Ibid., 270.
66. M. K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings,* 73.
67. MacDermott, "East, West."
68. Frank Tirro, for instance, describes the jazz aesthetic as "performer-centred," rather than "composer-centred." *Jazz,* 100.
69. Ho, "What Makes 'Jazz' the Revolutionary Music of the 20th Century?"

70. Hatcher, *Eclecticism and Modern Hindu Discourse,,* 91.
71. Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest.*
72. Amitav Ghosh discusses this as a global phenomenon. See *In An Antique Land.*
73. Spivak, *Critique of Postcolonial Reason,* 340.
74. Ibid., 364.

Chapter 5

1. For a short summary of Arundhati Roy's reception, see Kanaganayakam, "Religious Myth and Subversion in *The God of Small Things.*"
2. See "2002 Lannan Cultural Freedom Prize awarded to Arundhati Roy" on the Lannan Foundation website.
3. For details of her arrest, together with the controversy surrounding Arundhati Roy's reception and activity, see Reddy, "Arundhati Roy."
4. Misra, "Ideological Bases of Non-Alignment (An Overview)," 64.
5. Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 113.
6. P. Srivastava, "Age of Nehru," 77.
7. See, for example, Shahane, "Non-Aligned and Nowhere to Go?"
8. Much like the United Nations, which struggles with a limited mandate and the tendency of many member countries to ignore resolutions perceived as unfavorable to them, the nonalignment movement may be limited in its powers, but, as an essentially democratic transnational organization, this is perhaps a desirable feature, if sometimes a challenge.
9. See for example, Chomsky, *9-11.* This line of questioning has been repeatedly entertained in a variety of media outlets, however, both inside and outside the United States, such as *The New York Times* and *The Guardian.*
10. Mates, "Origins and Role of Non-Alignment," 185.
11. Nayar and Paul, *India in the World Order,* 125.
12. Middleton, *Retreat from Victory,* 435.
13. See Lennon's introduction to *The Battle for Hearts and Minds.*
14. Consider the title of Joel Krieger's recent book: *Globalization and State Power: Who Wins when America Rules?*
15. Kaplan, "Lawless Frontier."
16. A. Roy, *The Cost of Living,* xx.
17. A. Roy, *Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire,* 86.
18. Ibid., 90.
19. A. Roy, *War Talk,* 27.
20. A. Roy, *Power Politics,* 31.
21. A. Roy, *Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire,* 104.
22. Kimche, *Afro-Asian Movement,* 214.
23. A. Roy, *War Talk,* 47.
24. Ibid., 49.
25. Mullaney, "'Globalizing Dissent'?" 59; Chomsky, *For Reasons of State.*
26. A. Roy, *Power Politics,* 32–33.

27. A. Roy, *War Talk,* 12.
28. A. Roy, *Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire,* 37.
29. Ibid., 37–38.
30. Ibid., 67.
31. Despite being repeatedly referred to as an "Afro-Asian" movement by early commentators such as G. H. Jansen and David Kimche, the nonalignment movement also had instrumental members from other regions—General Tito of Yugoslavia was one of the movement's founders and noted leaders.
32. A. Roy, *Power Politics,* 119.
33. Ibid., 121.
34. A. Roy, *War Talk,* 106.
35. A. Roy, *Power Politics,* 40.
36. Ibid., 82.
37. A. Roy, *War Talk,* 23.
38. Ibid., 36.
39. A. Roy, *Power Politics,* 31.
40. Nehru does not further specify the identity of the author, but it seems like that he means Henry Dodwell, author of *The Cambridge History of the British Empire,* first published in 1929.
41. Spivak, *Death of a Discipline,* 16.
42. A. Roy, *War Talk,* 30.
43. A. Roy, *Power Politics,* 130.
44. Ibid., 5.
45. Spivak, *Death of a Discipline,* 72.
46. Ibid., 73.
47. A. Roy, *God of Small Things,* 31. All further references to this text will be noted internally as GST.
48. Benoit, "Circular Time."
49. Podgorniak, "Magical Realism, Indian-Style.," 259.
50. B. Bose, "In Desire and Death," 59.
51. On the one hand, when I presented an earlier version of this material as a conference paper at the 2005 Modern Language Association, held in Washington, D.C., in the discussion that arose after my talk, it became clear that some critics have deemed her a communist. On the other hand, Arundhati Roy has been labeled explicitly anticommunist in India, both by Aijaz Ahmad and by E. M. S. Namboodiripad, whose depiction in *The God of Small Things* is decidedly unfavorable. See Jose, "Now, it is EMS's turn to slam Arundhati Roy!"
52. Aijaz Ahmad, "Reading Arundhati Roy *Politically,*" 104.
53. B. Bose, "In Desire and Death," 61.
54. A. Roy, *War Talk,* 61.
55. Dvorak, "Translating the Foreign into the Familiar."
56. Podgorniak, "Magical Realism, Indian-Style.," 260–262.
57. Boehmer, "East is East and South is South," 64–65.
58. Cabaret, "Classification in *The God of Small Things.*"

59. Tickell, "*God of Small Things.*"
60. Mullaney, "'Globalizing Dissent'?" 58–59.
61. Huggan, *Postcolonial Exotic.,* 76–77.
62. Ibid., 105.
63. A. Roy, *Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire,* 37–38.
64. Mullaney, "'Globalizing Dissent'?" 64.
65. Ibid., 66.
66. See, for example, Silkü, "Transgressing the Linguistic Boundaries." See also Brinda Bose.
67. Fox, "Martyrology of the Abject," 44–45.
68. Huggan, "'Greening' Postcolonialism," 708.
69. Kimche, *Afro-Asian Movement,* 214.
70. Berger, "Forward," xiv.
71. Henwood, "What is Globalization Anyway?" 60.
72. A. Kumar, "Introduction," xvii.
73. Varma, "Developing Fictions," 228.
74. Ibid., 230.

Chapter 6

1. Joshi, *Last Jet-Engine Laugh.* All further references will be noted in the body of the text as LJL.
2. Ralph Pordzik identifies Janet Frame's *Intensive Care* and David Ireland's *The Unknown Industrial Prisoner* as dystopic novels that evoke the failure of the postcolonial state. *Quest for Postcolonial Utopia,* 33–42. To this list I would add Upamanyu Chatterjee's *Mammaries of the Welfare State.*
3. Consider, for example, the publication of the first anthology of such work in 2004: Nalo Hopkinson and Uppinder Mehan (eds.), *So Long Been Dreaming: Postcolonial Science Fiction and Fantasy. ARIEL* devoted a special issue to the subject in 33, no. 1 (2002). There have been other scattered articles, of course, primarily within the last five years. An earlier book, *Dark Matter* (2000), edited by Sheree Thomas and Martin Simmons, which anthologized speculative fiction of the African diaspora, contained work primarily by African-American writers, but also included some texts by writers from Africa and the Caribbean.
4. Mehan, "Domestication of Technology."
5. Sengupta, "Sadhanbabu's Friends."
6. Leggatt, "Other Worlds, Other Selves," 107.
7. Sanyal, *Indianness in Major Indo-English Novels,* 75.
8. Nehru, *Jawaharlal Nehru on Science and Society,* 16.
9. Many of these have been anthologized by Baldev Singh in *Jawaharlal Nehru on Science and Society.*
10. Nehru, *Jawaharlal Nehru on Science and Society,* 157–158.
11. Filmmaker Ashim Aluwalia has called the Indian call center industry "a symbol for the rapid change India is going through." Gentleman, "Hi, It's Bollywood Calling."

12. Chambers, "Postcolonial Science Fiction," and Nelson, "A Social Science Fiction of Fevers."
13. Pordzik, *Quest for Postcolonial Utopia,* 32.
14. Ibid., 46.
15. Schell, *Democracy Indian Style.*
16. "Mystery over Indian Freedom Hero," May 17, 2006.
17. Gordon, *Brothers Against the Raj.*
18. Pattanaik, *Political Philosophy of Subhas Chandra Bose,* 44, 20.
19. S. C. Bose, *Indian Struggle.*
20. Smith, *Oxford History of India,* 10.
21. S. C. Bose, *Indian Struggle,* 3.
22. Ibid., 7.
23. Ibid., 23.
24. Consider, for example, Subhas Chandra Bose's critique of Congress support for the Khalifat movement. Ibid., 114.
25. Crawford, "Feminist Futures," 197.
26. Harraway, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs."
27. I thank Sukeshi Kamra for alerting me to the overlap between the concept of Kaliyug and some aspects of this novel's dark vision.
28. See, for example, *Manu Smrti* in Embree, *Sources of Indian Tradition,* Vol. 1, *From the Beginning to 1800,* 220–221.
29. Kinsley, "Kali." Vrinda Dalmiya also emphasizes the contradictions and tensions inherent in the worship and representations of Kali. See "Loving Paradoxes."
30. Dystopia has also been a preferred descriptive term for Ruchir Joshi's Indian reviewers. See for example, S. Chaudhuri, "The Laugh at the End of the World."
31. Pattanaik, *Political Philosophy of Subhas Chandra Bose,* 94–95.
32. Gordon, *Brothers Against the Raj,* 109.
33. S. C. Bose, *Indian Struggle,* 81.
34. Ibid., 152.
35. Kishwar, *Religion at the Service of Nationalism,* 180.
36. Whitehall, "Problem of the 'World and Beyond,'"171.
37. Drake, "Back to the Future."
38. Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry,* 38–41.
39. Freud, "Structure of the Unconscious" and "The Instincts."
40. Pordzik, *Quest for Postcolonial Utopia,* 35.

Chapter 7

1. Manil Suri is best known as the author of *The Death of Vishnu,* also published in North America by Norton, in 2001.
2. N. S. Roy, "The Library of Hollow Books."
3. Singh, "Covering the Distance."
4. P. Chatterjee, *Nation and Its Fragments,* 73.

5. Nehru, *Autobiography,* 56–57.
6. Spivak, *Critique of Postcolonial Reason,* 188.
7. Hubel, *Whose India?* 77.
8. P. Chatterjee, *Nation and Its Fragments,* 72–73.
9. Ibid., 67.
10. This comment is included in the interview that is part of the reading group guide at the back of the Norton edition.
11. Bajwa, *Sari Shop,* 93. All further references will be given in the body of the text as to SS.
12. Khilnani, *Idea of India,* 118.
13. Lele and Singh, "Language and Literature of *Dalits* and *Sants,*" 33.
14. Sanyal, *Indianness in Major Indo-English Novels,* 53, 72.
15. I refer, of course, to Rohinton Mistry's novel *A Fine Balance.*
16. Jaggi, "Everyday Miracles."
17. This is according to the government's 2001 census.
18. For a complete account of Sikh separatism in the Punjab during the 1980s and the Golden Temple massacre, see Jeffrey, *What's Happening to India?*
19. The Punjab was one of the main sites of violence during partition. Talbot and Singh (eds.), *Region and Partition: Bengal, Punjab and the Partition of the Subcontinent.*
20. Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?"; Trivedi, "India and Post-Colonial Discourse," 240.
21. Khilnani, *Idea of India,* 39.
22. Guha, "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India," 7. Emphasis in original.
23. Aloysius, *Nationalism without a Nation in India,* 222–223.
24. Jaidev, "Na Anne Wala Post-Colonialism?," 182.
25. Spivak, *Critique of Postcolonial Reason,* 414.
26. Ibid., 358.
27. Gyan Pandey maintains that Gandhi's appeal to the masses has been vastly overstated and that, in the process, subaltern histories have been erased and appropriated. Shahid Amin's analysis of popular stories about Gandhi does suggest that he found an important place in popular consciousness, but that there was a considerable gap between his expressed intentions and the meanings the peasants drew from his presence and work. See "Peasant Revolt and Indian Nationalism" and "Gandhi as Mahatma," respectively.
28. Khilnani, *Idea of India,* 126.
29. Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory,* 75.
30. See Habermas, "Struggles for Recognition" and *Inclusion of the Other,* 113.
31. Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 44.
32. This point has been made at length by Madhu Kishwar. See *Religion at the Service of Nationalism and Other Essays.*
33. Alphonso-Karkala, "Nehru's Aesthetic Sensibilities," 107. He does not provided convincing evidence to support his claim, however.
34. Jawaharlal Nehru alludes to this, but glosses over the possibility of alternate readings based on this subsumed violence (DI 99).

35. Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory,* 257.
36. M. K. Gandhi, *Essential Writings of Mahatma Gandhi,* 64.
37. R. Kumar, *Essays in the Social History of Modern India,* 14.
38. Van Der Veer, "'The Enigma of Arrival,'" 95.
39. Jawaharlal Nehru argues that there is a direct correlation between receiving a modern, science-based education and attaining full citizenship through constructive contribution to the national community. Nehru, *Jawaharlal Nehru on Science and Society,* 26, 149.
40. Even Ranajit Guha, who struggles to recenter the peasant leaders who led popular uprisings, can only offer them as objects of knowledge, since their speech was never recorded. See *Dominance Without Hegemony.*
41. Zacharias, "Trial by Fire," 3.
42. In addition to the representations of Mother India in nationalist and postcolonial thought already discussed in this volume—in the writing of Nehru, Bose, and Rushdie, as well as the painting of Abinandranath Tagore—other important instances of the use of this trope include Katherine Mayo's antinationalist treatise on the state of women in India and the classic Bollywood film, to give just two examples. See Mayo, *Mother India.* See also *Mother India,* directed by Mehboob Khan, released in 1957.
43. P. Chatterjee, *Nation and Its Fragments,* 127.
44. Rajan, *Real and Imagined Women,* 130–131.
45. P. Chatterjee, *Nation and Its Fragments,* 73.
46. The Hindu Code Bill was not passed until 1956 despite the fact that the reforms it offered were in fact less radical than those promised by Congress many years before the attainment of independence.
47. See Spivak, *Critique of Postcolonial Reason,* 143 and Devi, *Imaginary Maps,* 41.
48. Zacharias, "Trial by Fire," 42.
49. Rajan, *Scandal of the State,* 50–55.
50. Rajan, *Real and Imagined Women,* 133.
51. Ibid., 77.
52. P. Roy, *Indian Traffic,* 141.
53. Rajan, *Scandal of the State,* 147–173.
54. Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism.*
55. See Fanon, *Black Skins, White Masks.*
56. Huggan, "Postcolonial Exotic."

Conclusion

1. Kohli, "Can Democracies Accommodate Ethnic Nationalism?"
2. Haksar, *Rights, Communities and Disobedience,* 76–105.
3. Bharucha, "Interculturalism and Its Discriminations," 4.
4. See Austin, *Indian Constitution.*
5. New provinces have come into existence in India as recently as 2000, when Uttaranchal and Jharkhand, largely tribal areas, were carved out of the states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, respectively.

6. Fanon, *Black Skins, White Masks.*
7. See Kamboureli, "Canadian Ethnic Anthologies."
8. Appiah, "Identity, Authenticity, Survival."
9. Yuval-Davis, "Ethnicity, Gender Relations and Multiculturalism," 201.
10. Habermas, "Struggles for Recognition."
11. Friedman, '"Global Crisis," 72.
12. Bauman, "Making and Unmaking of Strangers," 48.
13. Bipan Chandra, for instance, views communalism exclusively as a product of class struggle in the context of "underdevelopment." See *Communalism in Modern India,* 54. Akbar S. Ahmed, in contrast, argues that the difference between Hindus and Muslims is centered on binary oppositions—monotheism vs. polytheism, for instance—that made conflict an inevitable feature of life on the subcontinent. See *Jinnah.*
14. Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 19.
15. For a collection of opinions on the controversy surrounding *The Satanic Verses,* including much condemnation of the book by non-Muslims, see Ahsan and Kidwai, eds., *Sacrilege Versus Civility.* Rajeev Dhavan's article "Vajpayee and the Babri Masjid," originally published in *The Hindu* (December 15, 2000), is an example of Hindu condemnation of the destruction of the mosque and those who carried it out.
16. Melucci, "Identity and Difference," 61–62.
17. Medieval Spain, for instance, has been described precisely in these terms. Collins, *Early Medieval Spain.*

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